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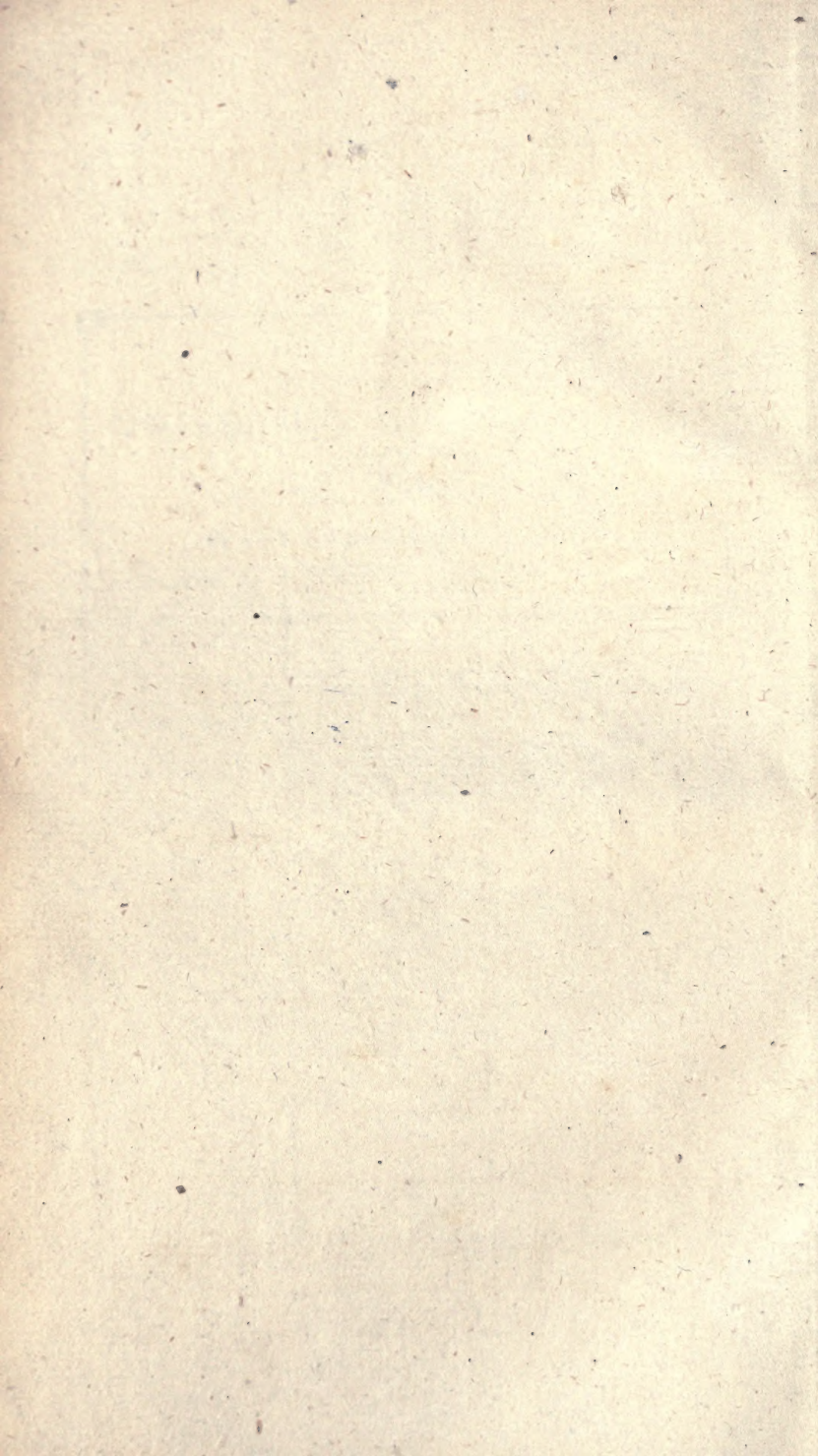
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*Et in Ecclesia Cathedrali
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A
GUIDE TO THE CHURCH;

IN
SEVERAL DISCOURSES.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
TWO POSTSCRIPTS;

THE FIRST,
TO THOSE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH
WHO OCCASIONALLY FREQUENT OTHER
PLACES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP;

THE SECOND,
TO THE CLERGY.

WITH
A new Introductory Preface to the Reader.

LIBRARY
OF THE
REV. CHARLES DAUBENY,
ARCHDEACON OF SARUM.

“There shall be no Schism in the Body.” 1. Cor. xii. 25.

SECOND EDITION,

PRINTED FOR

F. C. AND J. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON;
BY R. CRUTTWELL, BATH.

1804.

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TO THE READER.

THE following Discourses were originally designed for private circulation in a particular parish. Being written for that purpose, their accommodation to the existing state of that parish constituted of course the principal object in view. Should therefore some parts of the subject be more dilated, than may be thought necessary for general information; or some circumstances noticed which might have been omitted; the candid reader will, it is hoped, make allowance for what on these accounts may be an unwelcome trespass upon his time. Thus much it may be proper to say in behalf of the Discourses before him.

As an excuse, if excuse be necessary, for the alteration of my plan in giving them to the public, I have to plead, that upon their revival for the press, they were judged to convey some information applicable to the general circumstances of Christians in this

country; and that new books, though containing nothing fresh upon the subjects of which they treat, will be read; whilst old ones, more fraught with information, lie useless on the shelf.

The Postscripts subjoined to the Discourses must speak for themselves; because they were written for the purpose to which they are applied.

Upon the subject of Establishments I have nothing to unsay. Upon this subject I have written as I have been always taught to think. An uniformity of sentiment on great and momentous subjects constitutes a criterion, by which the thinking honest man will ever be distinguished. The opposite infirmity (if it may be called by so soft a name) will, I trust, never attach itself to my character. From the reader who differs from me in opinion, I have only, therefore, to crave that candour which, I trust, I shall on all occasions be ready to return.

“Errare possum, litigiosus esse non volo.”

To write upon ecclesiastical subjects without censure, is what no author must expect. The chief source, therefore, from which his satisfaction must be derived, will be the sincerity of his intention. To promote in any degree the honour of God by preserving the unity of the church, is an object which

every minister of that church ought to have at heart. With this view I have placed myself at the door of the temple with my torch; in the full confidence, that whoever shall be induced to enter in, will abide there for ever.

But though I am too well acquainted with mankind to expect that, after what has been heretofore written on the subject of *church communion*, any thing now said upon it will produce effect on those in whose minds judgment in this matter has been already passed; yet, if I may prove the instrument of confirming one wavering member of the church in a rational attachment to it, I shall not think my time to have been wholly thrown away. Should it, however, be the will of that Divine Master, in whose service I feel myself engaged, that I succeed not even thus far; there is one consolation remaining, which I shall still enjoy in common with all those of my brethren, who have exerted themselves in a similar cause; that so far at least as this subject is concerned,

LIBERAVI ANIMAM MEAM.



PREFACE TO THE READER.

THE writer who seeks not popularity, must not expect to be popular; whilst he whose object is truth, will be satisfied with the conviction, that the positions laid down by him are capable of being substantiated by their proper proofs. Should it be his misfortune to be writing to a world too much engaged with itself, or too indifferent to the subject he is handling, to give it due attention, he will consider himself as one born out of due time; and that his words are not true, *only* because they are not *seasonable*;—a consideration, which, to a man who has learned that the truth of God is of more value than the whole world, cannot, in the present day, be so much a subject for surprise, as it is for regret.

An endeavour to rouse Christians from an apparent apathy to a due sense of the tremendous danger attendant on that unsettlement of principles, and un-

settlement of institutions, which characterise the present revolutionary age; and to guard against the desertion of those old and tried paths, by which, under GOD, this country has been conducted to the acmé of national pre-eminence; by opposing a barrier to those licentious opinions, and irregular practices, which, if not counteracted, must terminate in the destruction of our excellent constitution; and by exposing the fallacy of that specious reasoning on Church subjects in particular, by which uninformed minds are continually drawn astray from the established road of truth into the bye-paths of error and schism; is an endeavour, for my engagement in which, as a minister of the Church of England, I have no apology to offer. At the same time, when I consider the vitiated taste of a fastidious public, which causes the generality of readers to pay more attention to polished periods than to the matter they contain, and, from an insatiable thirst after *new* things, to neglect the laying in that fundamental information necessary to qualify them to distinguish the chaff from the wheat in any subject of importance; I certainly feel it necessary to claim indulgence for a work, which, rejecting all meretricious ornaments unsuited to its dignity, professes only to deliver those plain words of truth and soberness, which are best calculated for general edification. Whilst to every one seriously attending to the subjects contained in the following pages, (and to no other we write) it must, it is pre-

sumed, evidently appear, that the opinion of the world can constitute no standard, by which the judgment of any reader of them ought to be determined.

The kingdom of CHRIST, confessedly, is not of this world: it was established with the intent, that this world should be conformed to it; not that this kingdom should, from time to time, be made conformable to the fluctuating opinions of a capricious world. As this kingdom then, according to the account given of it in Scripture, is to endure to the end of time; it is to be expected, that the government of it should correspond with its nature. no less than with the character of the faith it was intended to preserve,—that of being “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

That such is the case, (we have authority for asserting) no honest enquirer, properly qualified, can entertain a doubt. “It is evident (says our Church, in the preface to her Consecration Service) unto all men diligently reading Holy Scripture, and ancient authors, that from the Apostles’ time there have been these orders of ministers in CHRIST’s Church—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. And, therefore, to the intent that these orders may be continued, and reverently used and esteemed, in the Church of England, no man shall be accounted, or taken to be, a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and ad-

mitted thereunto, according to the form hereafter following, or hath had formerly episcopal consecration or ordination." On this supposed *unquestionable* ground, established by historical proof of the uniformity of the Ecclesiastical Constitution for a long succession of ages, the Church of England has proceeded with confidence in her judgment on this important subject. Hence it is, that in her Canons she exclusively appropriates the title of a *true* and *lawful Church* to that society of Christians in this country assembled under episcopal government; and determines all separatists from it to be schismatics; the sin of schism, according to its old and established definition, consisting in a wilful and needless separation from a true and lawful church. In praying, therefore, against schism in her litany, the Church prays against that sin, which in the Act for Uniformity, 14, c. ii, is described as attaching to those Christians, who, "following their own sensuality, and living without knowledge and due fear of God, do wilfully and *schismatically* abstain from, and refuse to come to, their parish churches," &c.

With the same view of the subject, the *visible* Church of Christ (which the Church on earth was designed to be) is described in our Article to be "a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered *according to Christ's ordinance*, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the

same."—Art. 19. For, on the ground that a commission authorising the administration of the sacraments constituted an essential part of *Christ's ordinance*; as the Apostles could not become stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel, till our Saviour thought fit to make them such; and consequently did not administer the sacraments previous to their having received a commission from him, authorising them so to do: therefore the sacraments cannot, in the judgment of the Church of England, be *duly administered according to Christ's ordinance*, but by those ministers, who, being "lawfully called and sent into the LORD's vineyard," thereby receive the same divine commission transmitted to them from the Apostles, for the discharge of the same sacred trust. And a commentator on the Apostles' Creed has observed, that those two articles, "*the holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints*," were inserted on purpose to prevent schism; and that *that* alone is their true sense and aim. No schismatic, therefore, can with a safe conscience repeat these two articles; inasmuch as by his schism he far too clearly and emphatically declares his disbelief of any peculiar holiness in the Catholic Church, and his disregard of the duty and the blessing of a Communion of Saints."*

The question then is, Has the Church of England judged correctly on this subject, or not? To the determination of this question, the establishment of her own

* King on the Creed, 310, 325.

right to the title of a *true Apostolical Church* of Christ may be thought a necessary preliminary. Admitting this right to be established, a point which every well-informed reader is competent to decide for himself, what was schism in the days of the Apostles, must continue to be schism still. For, on the assumption that the body of Christ, under its appropriate government, remains what it originally was; no circumstances of piety, learning, or wisdom, joined with schism, can change the nature of the sin.

But we venture to say, and it is by no means an hasty position that we advance, but one that has stood the test of deliberate and repeated investigation, that no ancient historical fact in the annals of mankind is capable of equal demonstration with that of the original constitution of the Christian Church. Nay, we say further, that no point of doctrine professed in the Church, stands on equally unquestionable ground with it. For we know of no doctrine, however clearly revealed, that has not, during the progress of Christianity in the world, met with its occasional opposers. But such, for the space of the first fifteen centuries of the Christian æra, was not the case with respect to the Apostolic Government of the Church. Bishops, indeed, were occasionally set up against bishops, and thereby the communion of the Church broken by schism; at the same time that the general position respecting the divine origin and establishment of Episcopal government was admitted on both sides. In

fact, the position relative to the Apostolic government of the Church by Bishops, stands confirmed by the testimony, not of this or that country only, but by the united, and for a long time uninterrupted testimony, of all Christendom. For the first fifteen centuries, no Church of Christ, in any part of the world, was known to exist under any other government; and it has been only since that period, which unfortunately gives date to the introduction of a different form, that Episcopacy has met with opposition from those, who have found themselves obliged to write it down, as the only way to discharge themselves from that sin, which must otherwise necessarily attach to a needless separation from it. At the same time, the attacks that for this purpose have been made on the Episcopal government of the Church, from the earliest date down to the present time, have served to prove the strength of the ground on which that government stands.

But it is much more easy to cavil about words, than to argue upon subjects; to start trifling objections, than fairly to defend them. And this mode of proceeding, the opponents of Episcopacy well know, is calculated to answer good purpose; because it throws stumbling-blocks in the way of ignorant minds, without, at the same time, furnishing sufficient information to qualify the parties to remove them; and every degree of doubt created, relative to the truth of any cause, becomes a step in advance towards the opposite

conviction. But surely never does the human mind so much expose its weakness, as when it deserts the public road of long-established knowledge, and ventures to strike out new paths for its devious movements; entangling itself with briars and thorns, and stumbling over stones, and stumps of trees, till it at last loses itself in an impervious wilderness. It being, however, our object to point out the beaten path of truth, rather than to trace the wandering course of error; to the objections that cavillers are continually bringing forward on this controverted subject, relative to the platform of Church Government not being found *totidem verbis* laid down in the sacred writings; and the order of Bishops not being to be clearly traced up to the Apostles; it is enough to say, that to us sufficient information appears to have been communicated in them to determine both those points. But were the information conveyed in the Apostolic writings on these subjects more scanty than it really is, this deficiency has been abundantly made up by the *unequivocal* testimony borne to these points by subsequent writers; some of whom were contemporaries with the Apostles, and supreme administrators of that government of which they speak. Proofs on this head will be found in their proper place. Suffice it for our present purpose to observe, with Bishop Taylor, that either CHRIST hath left no government for his Church, and in such case the Apostles must have greatly misunderstood an essential part of

their high office; or most certainly the Church hath retained that government, whatsoever it is: because it is unreasonable to suppose, that the original Founder of the Church would be wanting to the preservation of his own institution.

Admitting, then, that Clemens, Ignatius, Irenæus, and Cyprian, were honest men, and no fools, their testimony on this subject ought to be completely satisfactory to every reasonable man. And if to their testimony be added the concurrent uniform practice of fifteen centuries, the conclusion from such premises will follow, in the words of an ancient author;* that we must take care above all things to adhere to that which has been believed in all places, at all times, and by all persons; for this is truly and properly Catholic; and consequently, that “it never was, nor is, nor ever shall be, lawful to teach Christian people any other thing, than that which has been received,” from a primitive fountain.

In a word, the strength of the argument, in defence of the Apostolic Government of the Church, lies in this undoubted truth, that the Christian priesthood is a divine institution; which, as it could have no beginning but from God, so neither could it be continued, but in the way appointed by God for

* “Magnoperê curandum est, ut id teneamus quod *ubique*, quod *semper*, quod *ab omnibus*, creditum est. Hoc est enim verè propriè Catholicum. Annunciare ergo Christianis Catholicis, præter id quod acceperunt, nunquam licuit, nunquam licet, nunquam licebit.”
—Vincent. Lirin. adv. Hæres. cap. 5—14.

that purpose. What that way was, the Apostolic practice has plainly shewn. For CHRIST was in all that the Apostles did; and "GOD was in CHRIST, reconciling the world to himself." The ministry of this reconciliation was committed by CHRIST to his Apostles; and that ministry was confessedly branched out by them into three distinct orders, distinguished from each other by the appropriate titles of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon. From whence it follows, in answer to the objections above referred to, that from what our LORD *said* to his Apostles, and from what they *did* in consequence of his directions, sufficient information was conveyed, to enable the governors of the primitive Church perfectly to understand the plan, and continue the form of polity which the Apostles had begun; which form, the uniform history of the Church for fifteen centuries has demonstrably proved to be, what that of the Church of England now is, in the true sense of the word, *Episcopal*.

This argument, three centuries ago, would have been considered unanswerable: But since men thought proper to depart from the government of the primitive Church, and to erect a new platform of Church discipline, it has become necessary that their reasoning should correspond with their practice. Hence it has happened, in defiance of the undeniable position, that what was once truth on this head must be truth still, that Episcopacy has in these

later days become a subject of less established reputation than it heretofore was. “The Reformation (as an able Divine of our Church long since remarked) gave such a turn to weak heads, that had not weight enough to poize themselves between the extremes of Popery and fanaticism, that every thing older than yesterday was looked upon to be Popish and anti-Christian. The meanest of the people aspired to the priesthood, and were readier to frame new laws for the Church, than obey the old.”—
SHERLOCK.

The progress of error, however, in this case, as in most others, has been gradual. Those foreign reformers who were the first establishers of a new form of government in the Church, pleaded necessity for their conduct. It is not our business to examine the justice of that plea, but in candour to admit it. We therefore say for them, what on this occasion they said for themselves, that they considered it to be a most unjust aspersions of their character to say, they were *anti-Episcopalians*, or that they condemned or threw off Episcopacy *as such*; on the contrary, they lamented their unhappy circumstances, that they were not in a situation to partake of that advantage, which England so eminently enjoyed in this respect; considering their want of Episcopacy to be more their misfortune than their fault. Such was at one time the declared language of *Calvin* and *Beza*. And long after their day, when the assembly of divines

at Westminster, under the influence of the Scotch Covenanters, applied to the learned Blondel to bring forward what could be said in favour of the Presbyterian form, with the view of giving countenance to the plan then in agitation for overturning the ancient Apostolical Church government in England, he concluded his apology * for the opinion of Jerom with words to the following purpose: “ By all that we have said to assert the rights of Presbytery, we do not intend to invalidate the ancient and Apostolical constitution of Episcopal pre-eminence; but we believe, that wheresoever it is established conformably to the ancient Canons, it must be carefully preserved; and wheresoever, by some heat of contention, or otherwise, it has been put down or violated, it ought to be reverently restored.” This conclusion, not

* Dr. Munro, in his *Enquiry into the new Opinions, &c.* makes the following just observation on this work of Blondel, entitled, “ *Apologia pro sententiâ Hieronymi.*” Amstel. 1646. “ When (says he) the government and revenues of the Church were sacrilegiously invaded by atheists and enthusiasts, under Oliver Cromwell, the learned Blondel employed all his skill to make the ancients contradict themselves, and all contemporary records; and though every line that he had written, with the least colour of argument, had been frequently answered and exposed, it was still thought enough for the enemies of Episcopacy to say, that Blondel had written a book of 549 pages to shew that Jerom was of their opinion, and had sufficiently proved, that this ancient monk was a Presbyterian.”—Would my reader wish to form a particular judgment respecting the validity of Blondel’s sentiments on the subject of Episcopacy, he will be qualified for the purpose by an appeal to Dr. Hammond’s learned Dissertations, entitled “ *Dissertationes Quatuor, quibus Episcopatus Jura ex S. Scripturis et primavâ antiquitate adstruuntur, contra sententiam D. Blondelli,*” &c.

being suited to the object, the assembly had in view, was, in consequence of very pressing remonstrances against it, kept back; though, in justice to truth, it ought to stand on record, as it here does.*

But when this new form of Church government, which in its origin pleaded *necessity* for its introduction, and was considered, by the introducers of it, as supplying the place of what was then acknowledged to be a better thing, became so rampant as to bear with no opposition; those Presbyters, whom Calvin declared ought to be *anathematized*, who would not reverence such an hierarchy as the Church of England possessed, trampled that very hierarchy under foot, as an anti-Christian, iniquitous, and tyrannical usurpation.†—When, at a subsequent period, Episcopacy was restored with the Monarchy of this country, the Church of England returned to her ori-

10.* This important piece of information is given at full length in a letter from Dr. P. du Moulin to Dr. Durell, and published in the Appendix to his “View of the Government and Public Worship of God in the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas.” P. 339, 340.

† “Talem si nobis hierarchiam exhibeant, in quâ sic emineant Episcopi, ut Christo subesse non recusent, et ab illo tanquam unico capite pendeant, et ad ipsum referantur; in quâ sic inter se fraternam societatem colant, ut non alio modo quam ejus veritate sint colligati, tum vero *nullo non anathemate dignos fatear*, si qui erunt, qui non eam revereantur, summâque obedientiâ observent.”—Calvin de Necess. Eccles. Reform.

Beza's language on this subject was equally strong. Speaking of the Episcopacy of the Church of England, he says, “Fruatur sanè *istâ singulari DEI beneficentiâ*, quæ utinam sit illi perpetua.”—Tract. de Minist. Eccl. Grad. cap. i. and xviii.

ginal ideas on this subject; considering the case of Dissenters as a schismatical separation from the Communion of a true and Apostolical Church. The discourses written on this occasion, for the purpose of recovering the Dissenters to unity, though, through the infirmity of human nature, they failed in producing the desired effect, do infinite honour to the divines of that day; and ought to be in the hands of every clergyman, who would be thoroughly acquainted with the weakness of the objections, by which the unhappy separation from the Communion of the Church of England was originally maintained.*

The increasing establishment of separate congregations, which took place since the above period, though it could not alter the state of the case, as it really stands between the member of the Church and the separatist, or in any degree change the nature of the sin of schism, tended however to loosen the ideas of Christians in general on the subject of Church communion; so that some who entertained very correct notions relative to the original Apostolic form of Church government, began still to question, whether it was such a *sine quâ non* as might not be dispensed with. Le Clerc has exhibited a strong specimen of this accommodation of sentiment to the changing circumstances of times. Professing, in one page of his writings, “to believe Episcopacy to be of Apostolical

* These Discourses are now collected together in three vols. octavo, under the title of “*the London Cases.*”

institution, and consequently very good and lawful; that it was justly preserved in England; and that therefore the Protestants in England, and in other places where there are bishops, do very ill to separate from that discipline, because nothing is more proper to prevent things from being turned into chaos, and people from being seen without a call, and without learning, pretending to inspiration, than the Episcopal discipline:" with this belief in his mind, on the subject of Episcopacy, Le Clerc, in another part of his works, writes thus: "It is nothing to the purpose to shew that Christ and his Apostles instituted this form of Church government, and that the Church never had any other kind of government in it for above fifteen hundred years, from our Saviour's days downwards; which, though it be so clearly evidenced, that the truth of it cannot be denied; yet it is of no weight, nor deserves to be regarded. For those who would make the hierarchy necessary to the constitution of the Christian Church, ought to prove, that God instituted Christianity for the sake of the Episcopal order; and that the Episcopal order was not instituted for the sake of Christianity. For if this order was appointed for the sake of the Church, (which they cannot deny) they must also acknowledge, that if it be more advantageous to the Church in some places to have this order abolished, it is not amiss to lay it aside in such places." Now to us it appears, that there is nothing necessary either to be

proved or acknowledged on this subject; but something highly necessary to be considered; namely, that as God, that all-wise Being, “who seeth the end from the beginning,” was, by his Apostles, the institutor of the government of his own Church, (a kingdom not of this world;) it is to be in humility concluded, that no form that man might substitute in its place, would equally answer the purpose; and consequently that it could not prove more advantageous to the Church in any place, that the divinely-instituted form of its government should be abolished. Although therefore we make the hierarchy necessary to the constitution of the Christian Church, *because* it has been divinely instituted; we are not obliged to prove that God instituted Christianity for the sake of the Episcopal order; nor should we expect to be called upon for such proof by any man of competent understanding; it is sufficient for us to say, that the government of the Church, in its original form, was instituted for the sake of Christianity, to preserve its truth in the world; for from thence it will follow, that *for the sake of Christianity*, in other words, for the the security of the *same divine object*, it ought to be preserved. “We do not say, that Christianity was instituted for the sake of the outward polity of the Church, or the Church for the sake of the Episcopal order; but we may justly say, what is plainly said in Scripture, and was constantly professed in the purest ages of the Gospel, that the belief of “the Holy

Catholic Church" being a part of the faith which Christianity requires, and the Episcopal order a part of what we are taught to believe concerning the constitution and government of the Church, no separation must be attempted of what our God and Saviour has thus joined together."* And this, it might be presumed, should be enough to say to any reasonable and modest Christian on the subject.

But error cannot be stationary; it is constantly proceeding from bad to worse; the breach at which the waters enter is continually growing wider, till the inundation becomes universal. That looseness of opinion on the subject of Church government, which the original separation from the Apostolic form of it by degrees introduced, appears at length to be arrived at the *ne plus ultra* of ecclesiastic insubordination: for we are now, at the end of the eighteenth Century, told by a Professor in a Church which has been generally distinguished by the strictness of its discipline, that "the first order given to the Eleven to make converts, to baptize, and to teach, carries in it nothing from which we can discover that it was a *commission* entrusted to them *exclusively* as *Apostles* or *Ministers*, and not given them also as *Christians*; and that the Apostles were particularized, because best qualified, from their long attendance on Christ's ministry, for

* See Bishop SKINNER's excellent Defence of Episcopacy against the attack made on it by the late Dr. CAMPBELL, under the title of "Primitive Truth and Order vindicated," &c.

promoting his religion in the world; but not with a view to exclude any Christians, who were capable, from co-operating with them in the same good cause.”

—CAMPBELL, vol. i. p. 118.

Nothing but the eagerness to maintain, at all events, a favourite hypothesis, could, it may be supposed, have prevented the able refuter of the sophistical HUME from adverting to the particular circumstances which accompanied the original delivery of the Apostolic commission, and thence perceiving the objection to which such a mode of reasoning is palpably obnoxious. The word *commission*, from the verb *committo*, which in one of its leading senses signifies to entrust, to give in charge, is thus illustrated by AINSWORTH, from Cicero: “Rem magnam difficilemque alicui committere.” But according to Dr. CAMPBELL’S use of this word, as applied to our SAVIOUR’S commission delivered to his Apostles, we are to understand by it a commission of, no charge or office to particular persons, which might not be freely assumed and exercised *by all*; a sense, which if we mistake not, totally evacuates its established and peculiar meaning. We cannot, indeed, be surprised, that a minister, unable to trace his own commission from the proper fountain, should attempt to persuade the world, that no commission has been delivered, but what may be indiscriminately exercised; such a principle does not seem to be an improbable consequence of the original deviation from Apostolic practice. But that

such a *latitudinarian* principle should have been inculcated by a Professor from a theological chair, of which he claimed *exclusive* possession by virtue of a commission delivered to him for that purpose; and in a course of lectures, one principal object of which appears to have been the maintenance of the Presbyterian form of Church government, against the original Apostolical one of Episcopacy, is what could not have been believed, had not the fact been established by record. But were Dr. C. still living, we would take the liberty to ask one short question; which, if he could answer satisfactorily, we might begin to think his mode of reasoning on this occasion entitled to attention. If the particular appointment of certain chosen individuals, selected from a numerous body, to an important office, (as was the case in our SAVIOUR'S delivery of the commission to his Apostles) carries in it nothing in which we can discover a commission for their *exclusive* exercise of that office; it may be asked, on the principle that an all-wise Being does nothing in vain, why did such a particular appointment take place?

Had Professor CAMPBELL been a member of the *corps diplomatique*, and in that character written a treatise on the rights and privileges of ambassadors; and adopting a mode of reasoning similar to that here made use of, had he maintained, that the royal appointment of a certain individual to the representative office of an ambassador carried in it nothing, from

which we could discover any right to the **EXCLUSIVE** exercise of that office; but that, notwithstanding this particular appointment, the office still remained open to be exercised, *ad libitum*, by any individual who might think himself qualified to undertake it, or to assist in it; his brethren of the corps, it is presumed, would consider his treatise to be as little entitled to their thanks, as his argument was to their notice.

The able Reviewer of Dr. CAMPBELL's work in the Anti-Jacobin has illustrated the Doctor's mode of reasoning on this occasion by a different similitude; which, as it may strike some readers more forcibly, is here subjoined. "It is not probable (says the Reviewer) that his Majesty's commission to the President of the Supreme Court of Law in Scotland, *expressly prohibits* all other lawyers from executing that office to which it appoints him; and it is certainly not improbable, that there are many lawyers at the Scotch bar perfectly well qualified to preside over any court of law in that part of the united kingdom. Yet what would Dr. C. have thought of the man, who, having formed opinions of the courts of law similar to those which he had formed of the constitution of the Christian Church, should have said, "There is nothing in the commission given *to the President of the Court of Session*, from which we can discover, that it is a commission entrusted to him *exclusively as a judge*, and not given to him also as a lawyer; and that he is particularized in it, only be-

cause he is best qualified for discharging the duties of the office; but not with a view to *exclude* any lawyer, who is capable, from occasionally taking possession of his chair, and presiding with authority over the court."

Either of the above similitudes, it is presumed, is sufficient to expose the weakness of the ground on which the reasoning of Dr. C. stands; though it may prove insufficient to counteract the prevalency of the false principle built upon it. For unhappily, it is not the establishment of truth, so much as the support of *opinion*, that the generality of mankind are anxious to secure; and as the world is now circumstanced, the more *latitudinarian* that opinion is, the more welcome will be its reception. We are not, therefore, surprised to find the principle here alluded to daily gaining ground; and professed members of the Church becoming tools in the hands of those whose object it is to undermine it, by admitting the government of the Church to be a matter of "*doubtful opinion*;" and consequently, that the communion of one class of Christians may be equally scriptural with that of any other.

But by a matter of *doubtful opinion* we understand a matter, which, upon competent investigation, does not furnish sufficient evidence to determine the judgment on either side. On such a matter a difference of opinion must subsist; and where it does, it is its own justification. For men may differ about an *opinion*, without either breach of charity, or of the unity of the

Church; which requires not that all should precisely be of the same opinion, but of the *same communion*; and for this evident reason, because no difference of opinion among Christians, concerning matters *really doubtful or not essential*, can justify the positive sin of schism. But if any point be admitted to be a *doubtful* one, only because a difference of opinion exists upon it, whether the point in question relate to the constitution of the Church or its doctrine, the human mind must be left in an equal state of general indecision with respect to its religious concerns. A state of mind which will ultimately introduce that dangerous error, to which MELANCTHON looked forward with serious apprehension. “It was to be feared,” he said, “that the time would come, wherein men would be tainted with this error; either that religion is a matter of nothing, or that the differences of religion are merely verbal.”

It is true indeed, with respect to points on which there is no determining standard of appeal, an opinion will be right or wrong, according to the order or caprice of the day; and what was right to day may, in conformity to the fluctuation of the public mind, be wrong to-morrow. But the question is, does the point under consideration admit of proof? And has that proof been fairly appreciated? If it have not, the persons who, by occasional communion with different bodies of Christians, think proper to act, as some members of the Church do, on the sup-

posed ground of Church government being a subject of “*doubtful opinion*,” at the same time that they are to be taken as no judges in the case, pronounce, by their conduct, the severest sentence on their own negligence, and must be answerable for the consequences to which it may lead.

As this is both a serious and important subject, it should be considered seriously; and, as far as possible, abstractedly from all personal considerations and prejudices. In fact, this subject is to be determined only by the word of GOD, and the practice of the Church originally built upon it. For next to the Divine institution, Catholic practice constitutes the basis of the power and order of Episcopacy. What government was therefore instituted by the Apostles, delivered to their immediate successors, and universally established in the Church, supposing that capable of being ascertained, must constitute the standard, to which all future judgment on this head ought in reason to conform: on the consideration, that no judgment of the present members of the Church can come in competition with it; because no present members of the Church stand on the same ground with the Apostles, and their immediate successors, with respect to the *data*, from which alone a judgment on this subject is decidedly to be formed.

The reasoning which latitudinarianism has by degrees introduced into this subject, however plausibly it may sound to uninformed minds, is certainly replete with

dangerous fallacy. Provided, we are told, the *essentials* of religion are secured, what are deemed the *circumstantials* of it are no longer considered worthy attention. From which general premises it is concluded, that, provided Christians hear the Gospel, and become pious persons, it is a matter of no importance on *what ministry* they attend. With truly pious persons, of whatever denomination, every faithful minister of CHRIST'S Church must cordially wish to be united; for true piety is that gracious quality of the human heart, which at all times challenges respect. But it may be asked, we trust without offence, whether it can be any recommendation even of *true piety*, that it should be eccentric: or, whether *true piety* become less so than it really is, or in any degree sink in the scale of estimation, by being accompanied with a due regard to order and obedience? To us it appears, that of two supposed equal degrees of piety, that of the party who lives in communion with the Church is to be preferred to that of the person who separates from it; on the ground of his piety being accompanied with that humility, which, in conformity with the Apostolic injunction, has preserved its possessor in submission to the authority appointed to rule over him. We know that the first open rebellion against established order in the Jewish Church, though grounded on the holiness of the parties, was followed with the most signal mark of the Divine displeasure. And there is no passage in Scripture from which it

can be concluded, that similar rebellion in the Christian Church, is not equally offensive to its Divine Founder; though the crime be not attended with consequences equally prompt and decisive.

But it may be further asked of those Christians, who thus discriminate between the *essentials* and the *circumstantials* of religion, where they draw the line between what is to be regarded of *essential* obligation to Christians, and what is not? or by what criterion their judgment on this head is determined? Should the government of the Church be reckoned among their *non-essentials*, and consequently a matter of indifference, as from the practice of the day we have too much reason to conclude, we must say, that we are at a loss to understand, how a government that has received the sanction of Divine appointment, (“*divinâ lege fundatum*,” says CYPRIAN) can be seen in this light. But exclusive of this consideration, which should of itself, it might be supposed, preclude every seeming objection on this head; the great object which the government of the Church was designed to secure, proclaims the wisdom of its establishment. The Apostle calls the Church “the pillar and ground of the truth:” 1 Tim. iii. 15. “*Στυλος και ἐδραιωμα*,” a pillar, and the basis of that pillar: in other words, a pillar upon its basis, firmly sustaining that which was built upon it. The similitude is taken from ancient houses, built on pillars placed firmly on their bases, for the support of the

incumbent building. Thus the Church is considered as a pillar erected on the basis or foundation of JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles; for the purpose of sustaining and upholding the truth, which, as a superstructure, has been raised upon it. In conformity to this idea is the following description of the Church at Ephesus: “Now, then, (says the Apostle writing to his Ephesian disciples) ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of GOD; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief corner-stone. In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the LORD.”* “If (says the learned HAMMOND) the truth of the Gospel had been scattered abroad by preaching to single men, and those men never compacted together into a society, under the government of bishops or stewards, &c. such as Timothy was, to whom was delivered by St. Paul that *παρὰκαθήνην*, that *depositum*, or body of sound doctrine, 1 Tim. vi. 20, to be kept as a standard in the Church, by which all other doctrines were to be measured and judged; if, I say, such a summary of faith had not been delivered to all Christians that came in, in any place, to the Apostles preaching; and if there had not been some steward to keep it; then had there wanted an eminent means to sustain and uphold this truth of the Gospel, thus preached

* Ephes. ii. 20.

unto men. But by the gathering of single converted Christians into assemblies or churches, and appointing governors in those churches, and entrusting this *depositum*, or *form of wholesome doctrine*, to their keeping, it comes to pass, that the Christian truth is sustained and held up; and so this house of GOD is affirmed to be “the pillar and basis of the truth;” or “the pillar on that divine basis by which truth is supported.”

And hence it is that St. IGNATIUS, (who, St. CHRYSOSTOM informs us, received his ordination from the hands of the Apostles themselves, and consequently must have been instructed by them) insists so much on the indispensable necessity of communion with the bishop; because he considered that form of doctrine deposited with, and kept by the bishop in the Church, as the only sure means to support and preserve the truth. And such, in the early days of the Church, was considered to be that established mode of proof, by which the truth was to be effectually ascertained against heretics; namely, by tracing the form of sound doctrine, through its several successive depositaries, the governors of the Church, up to its original Apostolic source. On this established principle IRENEUS built his argument against the heretics of his day. “We can reckon up (said he) those who were by the Apostles ordained bishops in the churches, and those who were their successors, even to our own time. They never taught nor knew any of the wild opinions of these men; and had the Apostles known

any hidden mysteries, which they imparted to none but the perfect, (as the heretics pretend) they would have committed them with particular care to those persons, to whom they committed the churches themselves. For they would be extremely desirous, that those should be perfect, and unreprieveable in all things, whom they left to be their successors, and to whom they consigned their own authority.”* And afterwards, speaking with immediate reference to the Church of Rome, as the largest, most ancient, and then best-known, church in the world; he proceeds thus: “By shewing forth the tradition received from the Apostles, and the faith delivered to mankind, and descended even to us by means of the successions of those bishops, (to whom that Church has been committed) we confound all these heretics.”† TERTULLIAN argues against heretics in a similar way, where he says, “that the true knowledge of the Apostolic doctrine, of the ancient state of the Church, together with that of the character of the body of CHRIST, was preserved in the whole world by the

* “Habemus annumerare eos, qui ab Apostolis instituti sunt Episcopi in ecclesiis, et successiones eorum usque ad nos, qui nil tale docuerunt neque cognoverunt, quale ab his deliratur. Etenim si recondita mysteria scissent Apostoli, quæ seorsim et latenter ab reliquis perfectos docebant, his vel maximè traderent ea, quibus etiam ipsas ecclesias committebant. Valde enim perfectos et irreprehensibiles in omnibus eos volebant esse, quos et successores relinquebant, suum ipsorum locum magisterii tradentes.—IREN. lib. iii. c. 3.

† “Eam quam habet ab Apostolis traditionem, et annunciatam hominibus fidem *per successiones Episcoporum* pervenientem usque ad nos, indicantes confundimus omnes eos, &c.”—IREN. lib. iii. c. 3,

succession of bishops, to whom the Church in every place had been committed.”* And numberless are the testimonies to be produced from the ancient fathers, particularly from the writings of St. AUGUSTINE against the Donatists, to prove the principle of the Church being in their days considered as the foundation of the true faith, though it be inconsistent with the nature of a preface to bring them forward.

From hence it appears, that the Church, under its appointed governors, is to be considered as a faithful register, or notary, whose office it is to preserve the original records of its charter from corruption. It is called in Scripture, as we have already observed, and for the reason above given, “*the pillar of the truth.*” In the book of *Revelations* it is called a *candlestick*, whose office it is to hold and preserve the light. Now, remove the pillar, the building falls into ruin. Throw down the candlestick, the light will be thrown down with it, and most probably extinguished.

This Apostolic government of the Church then, however lightly it may be now esteemed, by persons who have formed their judgment on this subject more from the opinions of men, than from the revelations of GOD, appears to be of most *essential* importance, in the preservation of those very essentials, which many of those, who erroneously consider Church govern-

* “Agnitio vera est Apostolorum doctrina, et antiquus ecclesiæ status in universo mundo, et character corporis CHRISTI secundum *successiones Episcoporum*, quibus illi eam quæ in unoquoque loco est, ecclesiam tradiderent, quæ pervenit usque ad nos.”—Lib. iv. c. 63.

ment to be a matter of indifference, would be thought most anxious to secure; because it is the only sure standard, by which the authenticity of those essentials is to be ascertained. For, remove this standard, which the regular derivation of Apostolic truth, through the continued channel of the Church, has set up; and it may be asked, what criterion will remain, of authority competent to determine between the contending opinions of different sects, all of which will not fail to be equally confident in their respective tenets? In such case, the conclusion drawn will not fail to be to the disadvantage of religion in general. “Ye dissent among yourselves, (said CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, speaking of the objections thrown out against the Christian religion by the infidels of his day) and maintain so many sects; which sects, notwithstanding they all claim the title of Christian religion, yet one of them curseth and condemneth another. And therefore your religion is not true, nor hath its beginning or ground from God.”* In fact, however distant the event may be, the consequence of removing the standard of Church authority, by which the genuine doctrine committed to the Apostles is capable of being ascertained, and thereby giving countenance to the wild notion that every man is left at liberty to form his own Church, and

* Vos Christiani dissidetis inter vos, et tot sectas habetis; quæ licet omnes Christianismi titulum sibi vindicent, tamen alia aliam execratur et condemnat. Quare vestra religio vera non est, nec a Deo originem ducit.”—CLEMEN. Stromat. lib. vii.

make his own creed, must ultimately terminate in that general indifference, which is but one degree removed from downright infidelity. An indifference, which the enemies of Christianity have been enabled to recommend with too much success, on the ground of that uncertainty which must apparently attach to a subject, concerning which men are so infinitely divided among themselves in opinion. And “when,” (as a sound divine of our Church has observed) “through our own weakness, we have thus given an opportunity to artful and unworthy men, to sow the seeds of *confusion, and every evil work*; are we to wonder, that God should at length be provoked to suffer those who cannot agree with one another, to be destroyed of one another?”* Since then (as St. AUGUSTINE† has observed) “where God doth build his city, the Devil will have another hard by to confront it;” or in the language of LUTHER, “Where CHRIST erecteth his Church, the Devil will have his chapel;” it becomes matter for most serious consideration with those who seem indifferent to the divisions prevailing among Christians, whether any state of things in the Christian world can be more desirable to the grand enemy of the Church, whose continued object it is to coun-

* BOUCHER’S Discourses, p. 67.

† “When Satan,” (saith AUGUSTINE in another part of his writings) “saw his temples forsaken, and that his oracles were all put to silence, he cunningly devised for a new supply, to have always his ministers in or about the Church: qui sub vocabulo Christiano doctrinæ resisterent Christianæ—who under a Christian name might resist the Christian doctrine.”—AUGUST. de Civit. DEI; lib. xviii. c. 51.

teract, and thereby destroy, its gracious design, that to see the increasing growth of heresy and schism; and Christians seeking to know the truth, at the same time that, in consequence of the distraction of men's minds on the subject, they are at a loss where to find it. And these persons, who by their loose conduct are instrumental in removing the government of the Church from its Apostolic foundation, and placing it on the waves, the fluctuating opinion of the people, would do well to consider further; that, however sincere their zeal may be for the *essentials* of Christianity, they are setting up their judgment against that of God, by seeking to preserve them in a way different from that which has been in wisdom appointed for the purpose: in which case it is to be feared, that whilst they think themselves promoting the cause of God in the world, it will ultimately be found, that they have been, alas! unconsciously employed in a very different service.

The foregoing reasoning stands sufficiently confirmed by the history of facts, to claim the attention of every considerate man. It was (we are told) in those days, when there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes, that Micah introduced a separate house, a separate priesthood, and a separate religion, from his country. And when the ten tribes, in consequence of their revolt, separated from the established worship at Jerusalem, they fell into those numberless idolatries, which at

length led to their captivity and dispersion. It was also when there was no king in *our Israel*, and when, in consequence of the Apostolic government of the Church being superseded among us by an overbearing faction, every man did what was right in his own eyes; that sixty different sects prevailed in this land, presenting such a motley religion, as left the greater part of its inhabitants without any sound notions on the subject. It stands moreover upon record, that DURY, one of the leading and most zealous patrons of presbytery, and MELVILL's principal instrument in establishing that form of Church government in Scotland; as if twenty years' experience had furnished him with full conviction of the truth of JEROM's assertion, that bishops were originally placed at the head of the Church, that the seeds of schism might be taken away, (*"ut schismatum semina tollerentur;"*) left the following testimony on his death-bed in favour of the original Apostolic government. When some brethren came to visit him, he requested them to tell the Assembly as from him, "that there was necessity of restoring the *ancient government* of the Church, because of the unruliness of the young ministers, who would not be advised by the elder sort, nor kept in order. And since both the state of the Church did require it, and the King did labour for it, he wished them to make no trouble therefore, but only to insist with the King, that the best ministers, and of greatest experience, might be preferred to

places.”* And there is a curious circumstance in favour of Episcopacy, not perhaps generally known, recorded by Mr. JONES in his life of Bishop HORNE, informing us, that JOHN WESLEY, a semi-separatist from the Church of England, and the founder of a numerous sect, invested two ministers with the Episcopal character, (at least so far as he was capable of so doing) and in that capacity sent them over to America. The reason for this conduct, according to his own acknowledgment, was “to prevent disorders and confusions among his *poor people* (as he called them) in America, now all religious connexion between this country and the colonies was at an end.” An anecdote, which fully proves, that unity had, in Mr. WESLEY’s opinion, been preserved among his people by their relation to the Episcopacy of the Church of England; from which neither he nor they did ever profess themselves to be in a state of separation. And although Mr. WESLEY had not himself profited by the opinion delivered by the celebrated Mr. LAW† on the eccentricity of his enthusiastic un-

* SKINNER’S “Ecclesiastical History of Scotland;” vol. ii. p. 236.

† When JOHN and CHARLES WESLEY began their new ministry, one of them went to consult with Mr. LAW, as a person of profound judgment in spiritual matters; and when the case had been opened, and the intention explained, Mr. LAW made answer, “Mr. WESLEY, if you wish to reform the world, and spread the Gospel, you must undertake the work in the same spirit as you would take a curacy in the Peak of Derbyshire; but if you pretend to a *new commission*, and go forth in the spirit and power of an Apostle, your scheme will end in Bedlam.”—JONES’S Life of Bishop HORNE, p. 187.

dertaking, he was still wise enough to see that the establishment of the Episcopal Church government was the only plan, by which the irregularities of a licentious ministry were to be prevented.

But exclusive of the conclusion to which the foregoing considerations will, if permitted, lead the intelligent reader, there is one circumstance, admitting it to stand on firm ground, which ought to shut up all controversy on this subject.

The commission, by virtue of which the Apostles and their successors became governors of the Church, originally proceeded from the head of the Church: it consequently conveyed an investiture of authority from the only Fountain, from whence authority in spiritual matters is to be derived. “As my father sent me, (said CHRIST to his disciples, the Apostles) so send I you.” And from the circumstance of the original delivery of the Apostolic commission being accompanied with a declaration, which plainly imported the continuance of it to the end of the world; the Church has reasonably and universally concluded, as might be proved from the most unanswerable evidence, that it was the Divine intention, that *this same commission*, for the accomplishment of the same divine object, should accompany the Church through every stage of its progress. In conformity with this admitted and established principle, the governors of the Church of England have uniformly proceeded in their *authoritative* delegation of the ministerial

office. Either then this commission, thus regularly handed down to us, is still in force, or not. If it be, all authority in the Church must continue to be derived from it. If it be not, it is incumbent on those who act on this presumption, by assuming a ministerial office in the Church, independent of any *authoritative* appointment, to inform us, at what period this commission determined; because, if it be determined, the Church and its ministry are determined with it.

GOD, it is certain, can be bound only by himself; or by persons deputed and commissioned by him to engage in his name. The Sacraments are the seals of that covenant, in CHRIST by which GOD hath thought fit to be bound. The administration of them CHRIST formally committed to his Apostles, and their successors, for the benefit of his Church to the end of time. The validity of these seals depending, therefore, on the *commission* of the administering party, it follows, that where *this commission*, originally delivered by our Saviour, and by his authority successively continued in the Church, does not actually subsist, there the sacraments administered are not seals of the Divine covenant, but must be considered in the light of *human ordinances*.

This circumstance of the stewardship of the Divine mysteries being vacated, whereby the regularly-established administration of the Evangelical covenant comes to an end in the world, is a circumstance, that should weigh down all the comparative trifling con-

siderations, which are suffered to distract the minds of dissenting Christians at any period. In all churches are to be found speculative opinions, concerning which a layman, who is not obliged to subscribe the public confession of faith, need give himself very little trouble to enquire, whether they are true or false. But a defect in the mission of the ministers of the gospel invalidates the sacraments, affects the purity of public worship, and can therefore be no subject of indifference, as points of *doubtful opinion* are generally concluded to be; but a subject of *primary* and *essential* importance to every Christian professor. It has been said indeed, with a view, it is presumed, to that accommodating system which the Church of England is now persuaded to adopt, on the principle of every thing being doubtful concerning which a difference of opinion exists, (whether the subject under consideration has been fairly examined, or not;) that “when numbers are against the Establishment, the scale will turn; and if we do not buttress up our Establishment with those who are separated from it, the fabric must fall.” This language we certainly understand, when made use of with reference to the representation of his nation in a British House of Parliament; but when applied to the Church of CHRIST, we as certainly do not: because, with the constitution of the Christian Church numbers can have nothing to do. And it must be to a want of information sufficient to distinguish between the Church of Christ as a spiritual

society, *abstractedly considered*, and the establishment of that Church, *politically considered*, that the sciolists of the present day stand indebted for such a palpable confusion of ideas on this subject. Whether the political establishment of the Church stand or fall, the Church itself, so long as God shall think fit to preserve it in any country, will remain, as to its *constitution*, what it originally was, firm on its own Divine foundation. When those who are now separated from the Church shall be disposed, from conviction, to return into her bosom, the Church, as a tender mother, must with joy receive them, as strayed sheep returning to “the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.” But in such case, she receives them to a conformity with her doctrine, and a due obedience to her discipline. To receive them on any other plan, would be to attempt to form an uniform society out of heterogeneous and discordant parts; a society, which, on the supposition that it could be brought together, and by whatever political establishment it might be secured, must, from the nature of its composition, necessarily crumble into early dissolution, for want of that principle of unity, which is the cement of the Christian Church, namely, a steadfast continuance “*in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship.*” Whereas this unity, on which the very existence of the Church, as a divinely-constituted society, depends, according to the loose and generalizing notions of some modern interpreters, (with the

view of accommodating the word to those multifarious separations from the Church, which they appear interested to support) “ consists not in the visible union of members in *one community*, but in that great unity of the members of Christ’s body, dispersed over all parts of the earth, visibly united to *communities of different persuasions*.”* Now, though we do not take upon ourselves to explain, how the members of CHRIST’S body, the Church, which is described “ as a city that is at unity in itself,” can be visibly united to “ *communities of different persuasions*,” and still remain members of a community united in itself; because we have always regarded the union and division of the same body as conditions impossible, in the nature of things, to *co-exist*; yet we may be considered as discharging a part of our duty to the reader, in thus furnishing him with a specimen of that confusion of ideas, and misconstruction of meaning, by which so many sincere tho’ unsuspecting Christians are continually led away from the plain unsophisticated language of their bibles, which, if suffered to speak for itself, would rarely fail to preserve them sound members of the Church.

Impressed by a deep and repeated attention to the principles of the present times, and looking almost with an eye of despondency to that destruction of establishments, which such principles, if not timely counteracted, must ultimately effect, I feel myself, as

* Critical Review, March 1799, on the “ Guide to the Church.”

a Minister of the Church, justified in bringing forward to the consideration of every serious and thinking man the important subject of the following work.

In this mind, opposing patient investigation, Christian firmness and charity, to hastiness of decision, to ignorance and slander; I have taken the ground on which a Minister of the Church of England ought to stand; and on which, provided he be not wanting to himself, he may ever stand firm; by defending our Ecclesiastical government on the high ground of *Apostolical Institution*. The language made use of for the purpose has been that, which I have for the most part learned from my mother, the Church; a language, which were I, in times like the present, to withhold from fear of giving offence, I should be unworthy the character in which I glory, that of being her dutiful son. In stating the authority derived from the Apostles to those sacred persons to whom the ministry of reconciliation has been committed, my object has been to press on the minds of my readers the importance of the enquiry heretofore suggested by the judicious HOOKER: “Whether, as we are to believe *for ever* the articles of Evangelical Doctrine, so the precepts of Discipline we are not in like sort bound for ever to observe?”

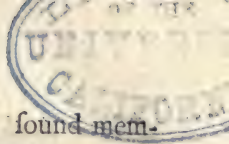
It is not, I will venture to say, from an improper prejudice in favour of names and distinctions, nor from a narrow notion that the affairs of CHRIST’S kingdom may not be administered under any govern-

ment different from that which has been actually established, that my conclusion on this subject has been drawn; but from the settled conviction, that what Divine Wisdom ordains must, in *this* as in every other case, be best calculated to promote the object which Divine Goodness has in view. It being therefore, in our judgment at least, a matter capable of demonstration, that the *Apostolic constitution* of the Church was the provision made, under the Christian dispensation, for the preservation of true religion in the world; for *this reason* it is, that we look up to the circumstantialia of order and government, as they exist in the Episcopal Church of this country, (considered as a branch of the Catholic Church of Christ) as to means divinely appointed for the purpose of conducing to that important end. And it is to be deeply lamented, that Christians of the present day seem, for the most part, not to be acquainted with the fundamental constitution of the Church, nor sufficiently to have attended to the consequences of rebellion against it, to be duly sensible of its value. It is, however, incumbent on us to remark, what the testimony of almost three centuries has now proved; that to the Establishment of the Apostolic constitution of the Church in this country, we are, under Providence, indebted for the maintenance of primitive truth among us, assailed as it has been by every mode of attack, and by every diversity of sect. And it is to the possession of this Establishment, provided the

Clergy of it be faithful to their important trust, and the members of it manifest a due regard for that Christian unity, which the Apostles so solemnly enjoined, that this country will be indebted for the preservation of that character, which the general voice of Europe once conferred upon it, of being *the Eye of the Reformation*; and our excellent Church continue, what at that period it was deservedly considered to be, the glory of all churches.

My Preface might here conclude; sufficient, it is presumed, having been said in it to demonstrate the importance of the subject, which it is intended to introduce. But, as there are some words frequently employed in a perverted sense, which, by creating an undue impression on the mind, thereby prevent that fair enquiry into certain subjects, which might ultimately establish truth; I crave indulgence, whilst I detain my reader a few moments longer.

It is common with the world to pay more attention to *names* than to *things*; and writers are never wanting to take advantage of this too general weakness, by making the language of popular impression their substitute for that of sound reasoning and legitimate proof; a specious kind of writing, perfectly well suited to the indolence of the present readers, who, generally speaking, have neither time, patience, nor candour of mind, fairly to examine received opinions to the bottom. In consequence of this degradation of the mental powers, should a Divine in these days venture



to write on professional subjects, as a sound member of the Church may be expected to write, he must make his account to have his character stamped with the titles of *bigot* and *high-churchman*; titles, which, whatever be their *proper* meaning, in the sense in which they are on such occasions to be taken, are certainly intended to disgrace the party to whom they are applied. But when, on turning to my dictionary, I find, that under the article *bigot*, I am to understand, on the authority of Dr. WATTS, “ a man *unreasonably* devoted to a certain party or to certain opinions,” I am at a loss to conceive with what propriety that title can attach to a Divine, whose opinions have been formed, not by any *blind* and *unreasonable* attachment to certain prejudices, but by the deliberate established judgment of the Church, of which he is a member; a judgment, which itself stands on the broad and firm ground of Scripture and primitive antiquity. And if the title of *high-churchman* conveys any meaning, beyond that of a decided and principled attachment to the Apostolic government of the Church, as originally established under the direction of the Holy Spirit by its divine Founder, (from whom alone a commission to minister in holy things can properly be derived;) it is a meaning, for which those must be answerable, who understand and maintain it; the sense annexed to that title, in my mind, containing in it nothing, but in what every sound minister of the Church of England ought to

glory. And when it is considered, that that constitution of the Christian Church, for which we manifest our reverence, and in defence of which we have ventured to commit ourselves to the public, has been acknowledged even by those who are least disposed to commend it, to “ have been from the beginning favourable to peace and good order, and submission to the Sovereign; and never been the occasion of any civil commotion in any country in which it has been once established;”* a principled attachment to such a Church will, it is presumed, by every well-wisher to the community, be regarded as a more fit subject for respect and commendation, than for obloquy and reproach.

But it is said, and the present liberal mode of thinking (as it is falsely called) sanctions the idea, that to insist on the *Apostolic form*, as the only Divine institution of Church government, is to pronounce an uncharitable sentence on all those who do not conform to it; on the ground, that those Christians who are not *in* the Church, must necessarily be *out* of it; and as such, unpossessed of a *covenanted* title to the promises made to the Church by its Divine Head. Now, admitting the consequence in this case, it is certainly a consequence for which the Clergy of the Church of England are not answerable. To be consistent ministers of that Church, they must argue consistently from the premises which that Church has laid down.

* SMITH'S “Wealth of Nations,” b. viii. c. 1.

Admitting, then, that the conclusion drawn from these premises, may sound harsh to the ears of those who separate from her communion, it ought still not to offend them; because it is that conclusion, which they must expect should be drawn by every honest minister of the Church; at the same time that it is a conclusion, by which those who deny the validity of the premises in this case laid down, cannot consider themselves to be affected. The question therefore is not, whether the Church of England has determined rightly, or otherwise, on this subject; but whether her ministers do not act in strict conformity with their character and duty, by instructing the members of that Church in the nature of the spiritual society to which they belong, with the view of preventing them from sinning ignorantly by needless separation from it. At the same time, with respect to those who are in an actual state of separation, we say with the Apostle, “ what have we to do to judge them that are *without*; them which are without God judgeth,” they are in the hands of that all-gracious and all-merciful Being, who judgeth righteous judgment; and to Him we leave them.

To those therefore, who seem to consider the delivery of any decided judgment on the constitution of the Church, and the subjects necessarily connected with it, to be inconsistent with Christian charity, it may be proper to observe, that the most enlarged idea of toleration is perfectly consistent with the most

strenuous exertion in the cause of the Church; and that “the zeal,” which is “according to knowledge,” while it shuns the intemperance, which is as repugnant to the spirit of Christianity, as it is to the common feelings of mankind, still finds itself properly employed, in contending earnestly for the truth. It was the language of the primitive Church, that “it is no part of religion to force religion.” “Non est religionis cogere religionem.”* And, on following the history of the Christian Church, from its earliest days down to the present time, it will be found, that to be *intolerant* and *uncharitable* has been more the characteristic of *error* than of *truth*. To contend earnestly for the truth then, and to be wanting in charity towards those who unhappily do not possess it, are dispositions of the mind, between which there is certainly no necessary connection.

But if a minister of the Church is to refrain from teaching the fundamental principles of Church government, from a consideration of thereby giving offence, by appearing to pronounce sentence on those who separate from it; for the same reason he must refrain from insisting decidedly on any doctrine whatever; for there is no doctrine of the Church, which will not meet with parties to whom it is obnoxious. The preaching up, for instance, the being and providence of GOD, will be offensive to atheists and worldlings, (of whom, it is to be feared, there is no

* TERTULLIAN ad SCAPULAM.

small number;) because they are thereby concluded under damning unbelief. The authority of the Scriptures, and the certainty of revealed religion, are points equally offensive to deists and sceptics. The union of the divine and human nature, as preparatory to the great work of atonement, is a doctrine not to be insisted upon; because of its alarming consequence to Arians, Socinians, and Unitarians. The doctrine of the Christian Sacraments must, in like manner, be kept out of sight; from fear of giving offence to that sect among us, which is distinguished, partly, by the rejection of the seals divinely appropriated to the Gospel covenant.

This sacrifice of principle, by the adoption of an accommodating system, from a desire of not giving offence, (which by a *misnomer*, characteristic of the present age, is called *liberality*) certainly bears no affinity to that Christian charity to which it pretends. For Christian charity has for its primary object the salvation of souls; which is not to be effected by humouring men in their error, but by making them see it; and with this view, writing them *up* to the truth, instead of writing, as the manner of some hath been, the truth *down* to them. And the great excellence of Christian charity consists in its making a proper discrimination between the sinner and the sin; condemning unequivocally *the one*, whilst it is at the same time desirous of sparing, and even doing all manner of good to *the other*: after the example of

our truly charitable SAVIOUR, who, tho' he severely rebuked his disciples for their desire to call down fire on a village of Samaria, as a punishment for its refusal to receive him; yet, when he had occasion to speak of the religion of its inhabitants, he did not admit that they were within the pale of the true Church; by decidedly declaring, that "they knew not what they worshipped, and that salvation was of the Jews."

With such an example before me, I claim the right, to which a Minister of the Church is entitled, of maintaining the ground on which she stands; and of reasoning, for the benefit of her members, in conformity with those premises, which she has authoritatively laid down; without being considered answerable, in any way, for consequences which may attach to a denial of her premises, or to a separation from her communion. These consequences it is my utmost wish, from a general love towards my Christian brethren, to prevent; though I dare not indulge an hope, that any feeble efforts of mine will turn to much account, after the arguments of so many wise and learned men have proved ineffectual. Still, when I see so many apparently idle and unconcerned, whilst the enemy is digging and undermining the very ground on which they stand; and at the same time consider, that they who help not to support the Church when she is in distress, do in reality contribute to pull her down: in writing, as an honest minister of that Church

ought to write on her subject, I feel that satisfaction, which must ever accompany a conscientious discharge of duty.

All I request of my reader is, that he would lay aside every prejudice, and with becoming reverence and humility of soul take his instruction from God: since to be wise above what is written, whether in matters of doctrine or discipline, is to throw up the reins to inordinate affection, and to multiply error without end. Adverting to the effects the latitudinarian principle has already produced in the world, its progressive nature, and the extremity to which, if not counteracted, it necessarily leads; let him consider the growing indifference to the Divine institution of the Church, the contempt of its order, and the indiscriminate assumption of its sacred ministry, to be, what it is much to be feared it is, a part of that wild philosophy, “which inculcates on every individual this dangerous principle; that his own capricious and uninformed notions are to supersede those ancient rules, which are taught by Divine Wisdom, or established on the basis of human experience; and which have hitherto been regarded with reverence, and considered as the tests and the bulwarks of morality: a philosophy, which, on the ground that every man is to erect a standard of right and wrong for himself, maintains the most criminal and destructive actions to be justifiable, provided their perpetrator have so depraved a judgment, and so vitiated a heart, as *sin-*

cerely to think them meritorious.”* A philosophy, which, regarding with supercilious contempt the established systems of policy, morality, and religion, by which the conduct and opinions of mankind have been hitherto regulated, has been long employed in sapping the foundation on which all submission to government stands; with the view of thereby so unsettling the human mind on this important subject, as to dispose it not to leave one stone upon another of those venerable edifices, which it hath been the labour of so many ages to raise and to complete. And unless, by suffering his reason to become the dupe to such a licentious principle, he has learned to think with the senseless philosophers of the day, that the maintenance of true religion is a matter of no moment to a state; he cannot remain indifferent to the present increasing separation from a Church, which, from its distinguished excellence, has been considered, by those who had no personal attachment to her, as exhibiting the most perfect specimen of reformed Christendom.

But when it is considered, that the most fatal errors derive their origin from the little attention that is paid to the constitution of the Church; the indifference with which this subject is now regarded, even by those whom we must suppose to be interested in it, is not more the cause of astonishment to us, than of concern. For, admitting that a regular

* “View of the Moral State of Society,” by J. BOWLES, esq.

form of Church government was once established by Divine authority, it requires no argument to prove, that all those various forms with which the choice of Christians is now distracted, cannot be right. In fact, on the ground of such admission, all must be wrong which deviate from the original model; because our SAVIOUR, who, through the medium of his Apostles, laid that model down, was alone entitled to construct the platform on which his own kingdom should be built. But what adds still greater weight to this consideration, by proving that it is a circumstance by no means of small importance whether Christians adhere to this Divine model or not, is; that, as the great scheme of Redemption is the sole effect of Divine grace, it necessarily must be embraced as it is proposed: on the acknowledged principle, that of him who is to receive a favour, it is to be expected that he should accede to the terms on which it is offered. Now we know *from Scripture*, that all the promises which relate peculiarly to the Gospel, are made to the Church of CHRIST; and we have no authority *from Scripture* to say, that any but those who are members of that Church are interested in them. The “secret things belong to the LORD our GOD;” on them, consequently, we have no judgment to form. But with respect to those which have been revealed, we are to judge in conformity with the tenour of such revelation; from which revelation it should seem, that the wilful de-

sertion of that Church to which the promises have been made, must be considered as a virtual rejection of the terms on which the mercy of the Gospel has been proffered, and a formal renunciation of all *covenanted* claim to its benefits.

With this chain of reasoning in view, should my arguments fail to bring conviction to my reader's mind, relative to the constitution of the Christian church, and his own duties consequent thereupon; I leave him with my best wishes and prayers to his own judgment: but not without reminding him, that the subject here laid before him is the result of the fullest and most deliberate investigation, grounded on the conviction, that that cementing bond of the spirit, for which our SAVIOUR so earnestly prayed, which unites Christians to their head, and to one another; making them regard themselves as members of the same body, *the Church*; as a fold of sheep, not as straggling individuals; is not a matter either of indifference or "doubtful opinion," but capable of the most demonstrative proof; and consequently of most *essential* importance.

One of the most learned and most spiritual bishops that our Church can boast, in one of his sermons on the sending of the Holy Ghost, has placed this subject of Christian unity in that striking and beautiful light, so peculiar to himself, which cannot fail to leave an impression on the mind of every spiritual reader. Speaking of the Holy Ghost, he calls Him

“the *very essential unity*; the *love-knot* of the two persons, the Father and the Son; even of God with God. And he is sent to be the union, the love-knot of the two natures united in Christ, even of God with man. And can we imagine, that He, *essential unity*, will enter but where there is unity—the Spirit of Unity; but where there is unity of spirit? Verily there is not, there cannot possibly be, a more proper and peculiar, a more true and certain, disposition to make us meet for Him, than that quality in us that is most like his nature and essence; that is, *Unanimity*. Faith to the word, and love to the spirit, are the true preparations. And there is not a greater bar, a more fatal opposition, to his entry, than discord and disunited minds. They neither give nor receive the Holy Ghost; their heart is divided, their accord is gone: the cord of love is untwisted; they cannot live; the spirit is gone too. And do we marvel, that the spirit doth scarcely pant in us? that we sing and say, ‘Come, Holy Ghost;’ and yet he cometh no faster! Why; the day of Pentecost is come, and we are not all of one accord.—*Accord* is wanting: the very first point is wanting to make us meet for his coming. Sure his after-coming will be like to his first; to them that are, and not to any but to them that are, *of one accord*.

“And who shall make us of one accord? High shall be his reward in Heaven, and happy his re-

membrance on earth, that shall be the means to restore this accord to the Church; that once we might keep a true and perfect Pentecost: when the disciples of CHRIST were all *with one accord* in one place."

May the GOD of Peace grant, that every member of the Church, more particularly every Minister of it, may feel the full force of the above spiritual language of the excellent Bishop ANDREWS. In such case, we might hope, that the Dove,* the spouse of CHRIST, as the Church is called, may still take her rest in this favoured land; and that the spirit of her beloved may dwell among us of a truth.—To this end, do Thou, O Holy and Eternal Spirit, who, in separating us to the ministry, didst take us out of the world, cleanse our thoughts by thy holy inspiration, keeping them out of the corruptions, and above the policy or wisdom of the world, which is "foolishness with GOD." And do Thou, O blessed LORD, who hast set superior watchmen upon the walls of thy Church, and inferior at her gates, cause them to watch over her by night and by day; that uniformity of doctrine and wholesomeness of discipline may so work together for the good and glory of thy Church, that she may not always labour under the

* Song of SOLOMON, c. ii. 14.

"Ergo hanc unam *Columbam, et dilectam sponsam suam* CHRISTUS appellat; hæc apud omnes hæreticos et schismaticos esse non potest." Optat. Milevitan.

distress and disorders of a siege; but may come forth in the face of her enemies, “terrible as an army with banners.”* Even so, Amen.

It remains only, from a respect usually paid to the candid reader, that I briefly inform him, that the present edition differs from the preceding one, chiefly in the adduction of those authorities, which were judged necessary to the more firm establishment of the ground undertaken to be maintained. And if, instead of taking up with the floating, unsettled, and for the most part erroneous opinion of the day, on the subject of the Church, he will be at the trouble to visit the fountains, from which I have drawn; he will know, that no *new* things are brought to his ears, but that I have written as I have read. The advantage he will derive from this mode of proceeding will be twofold. In the first place, as a balance against his not thinking with the croud, (a mortifying circumstance, it must be allowed, to those who take the world for their standard) he will have the satisfaction to think with those, who most considered, and certainly best understood, this important subject. In the second place, should the argument, in his opinion, have suffered from my want of skill in conducting it, he will be qualified to improve it to his own mind; and having, as I have no doubt will be the case, thereby confirmed himself, his time cannot afterwards be better employed, than in strengthening his brethren.

* Song of SOLOMON, c. vi. v. 4.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

NO wise man makes the practice of the world a rule for his government in religious matters; being satisfied that no practice, however general, can make that right, which the word of God has determined to be wrong. Custom may indeed reconcile us to any thing. But custom is not the law of the wise man; because, being at times no less an advocate for error than for truth, it can furnish no reasonable satisfaction to the party governed by it. Men, as men, are liable to error. Nevertheless error and truth are two things essentially different from each other; and it will always constitute the best employment of the reasoning faculty, properly to discriminate between them.

To enable the thinking man so to do, that he may thereby become proof against the various delusions

upon the subject of Religion, which have at different periods prevailed in the world; his appeal must be made to the standard of judgment set up in the word of God.

Time was, when *Schism*, or the sin of dividing the Church by a separation from it, was considered to be a sin of the most heinous nature; “so great, that some of the ancients have thought it is not to be expiated by the blood of martyrdom.”* It cannot be, because opinions on this subject have changed with the times, that the nature of this sin is also changed. For so long as the Church continues to be, what it originally was, a *society of CHRIST’s forming*, a wilful separation from it must be at all times equally sinful; it being not less an opposition to a Divine institution in one age of the Church than in another. Consequently what was said upon this subject in the first days of Christianity, must apply to it with the same force and propriety in the times in which we live.

Upon the authority of an inspired Apostle we are informed, that those who “cause divisions in the Church” are to be avoided, as persons “who serve

* *Persuasive to Communion with the Church of England*, by Bishop GROVE. See London Cases.

not the LORD JESUS." "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them: for they that are such, serve not our LORD JESUS." Rom. xvi. 17. If they serve not the LORD JESUS, it requires no great sagacity to determine whom they serve, for there are but two masters in this case that can be served; either that Divine Master, who, in love to man, set up his kingdom in opposition to the prince of this world, that he might thereby counteract his evil work; or that Evil-Worker himself, whose constant employment it is, so far as in him lies, to divide and destroy that kingdom.

Now no greater advantage can be given to the common enemy in any cause, than by a division among the parties professedly engaged in its support. A consideration, which accounts for that stress, so repeatedly laid in the Apostolic writings, upon the preservation of union and harmony among Christians; as essential to the well-being of the Church, considered as a society formed by God, for the purpose of carrying into effect a regular design for the benefit of its members.

It having pleased Divine Providence to place me in a situation, which has given me an opportunity

of seeing some of those many evils consequent upon a deviation from God's plan in the establishment of his Church upon earth; I should do less than my duty, did I not take occasion to speak plainly on this subject; trusting that what, from a motive of pure charity to all, may be said upon it, will be received charitably by all; without, if it be possible, any mixture of that prejudice, which is able in a manner to convert truth into error, when the mind of the party, to whom it is addressed, feels indisposed to receive it.

The object in view on this occasion is two-fold; to qualify, in the first place, the members of the Church to give a reason for their communion with it; and thereby prevent their being carried about from one place of public worship to another; upon the mistaken idea, that it is a matter of indifference *where* the word of God is preached, or *by whom*: and in the second place, to open the eyes of those, who, with perhaps the best intention, may, through ignorance, have separated from the Church; and who, were they better informed, might not scruple to prefer its sober and edifying worship to that in which they are at present engaged.

He must be little acquainted with the world who does not know, that religious prejudices leave the

most powerful impression upon the human mind; and that till these are removed, it is impossible to form a fair judgment upon a subject of this nature. Those who have taken their religion upon trust, or have received it as a sort of hereditary possession from their forefathers, seldom give themselves the trouble to form any judgment upon it. Whilst others, who, in the choice of their religion, consult the gratification of passion, interest, or the promotion of some particular object; are, for the most part not in a condition to bring this matter to a fair discussion. The only hope of success therefore in this case must be, from an appeal to the honest and well-disposed; those who seek the truth in sincerity, and are resolved to follow wherever it may lead.

Such are doubtless to be found in all congregations of Christian people; some of whom, in consequence only of their never having had the truth properly laid before them, have taken up with erroneous opinions; which, from prejudice of education or incapacity, they are prevented from bringing to the test of reason and Scripture. Deriving their natural growth in error from their parent stock, they have by years acquired an habitual attachment to it; at the same time that the earnest zeal even of those who

might be qualified for the purpose, will not let them stop to examine the source from which it has been derived. Such men may be considered as not far from the kingdom of God; and it must be the earnest wish of every minister of that kingdom to bring them into it. Could these men be but once brought acquainted with the nature of CHRIST's church, they would never separate from its communion; because they would be convinced that the plan upon which CHRIST has established that church, must be conformed to by all, who expect to enjoy the privileges annexed to it.

On looking into the writings of the Apostles, we find frequent mention made of the unity of the Christian church, as necessary to the preservation of that peace which CHRIST left with his followers; and repeated and earnest cautions against those divisions, by which it must be unavoidably disturbed. The Founder of this church is emphatically stiled the *Prince of Peace*; because he is not only the maker of peace between God and man, but also the author of a religion calculated to promote that blessing upon earth. The mark or distinction, therefore, by which the professors of this religion ought to be known, is, that love and harmony by which they are joined

together in the same mind and in the same doctrine: agreeably to the description given of them in the earliest stage of their connection; before the prince of this world, that destroyer of peace, had sown his seeds of division among them; when, as we read, “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” Acts iv. 32.

As the time of our SAVIOUR’S departure from the world drew near, the future establishment of his church appears to have constituted the most interesting subject of his thoughts. That most earnest and solemn prayer addressed to his FATHER almost immediately before his suffering, strongly marks out to us his dying wish upon it; where, after having first prayed for those particular disciples, to whose immediate care and direction he thought fit to commit his church; that they might be duly sanctified for the great work of their ministry, he thus proceeds:— “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that *they all may be one*, as thou, FATHER, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” JOHN xvii. 20, 21.

Unity, therefore, was designed to be an essential characteristic of the church of CHRIST; the members of which were to be considered as constituting one body, animated by one spirit, imparted to them by their regular communication with one head, JESUS CHRIST. Agreeably to which idea, the Apostle addresses himself to his Ephesian converts: "I beseech you (says he) that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." As a reason for their so doing, the Apostle proceeds to remind them, that "there is *one* body; and *one* spirit; *one* hope of their calling; *one* LORD, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* GOD and FATHER of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." Ephesians iv. 1, &c.

We have here a picture of the Christian church in its perfect state; in which, in conformity to CHRIST's institution, it ought at all times to be found: a society joined together by the bond of charity, in the profession of the same faith; into which the members of it are admitted by one and the same baptism; in consequence of which they become partakers of that spirit, which is derived to

them from their union with one head, JESUS CHRIST; and are supported by the lively hope, that where that Head of the body is, there, in the fulness of time, shall the members of it be also.

If the church, as it is now circumstanced in the world, bear little resemblance to this primitive pattern, it must be in consequence of men either having formed mistaken notions with respect to the nature of it, or deviated from the plan upon which it was originally established. In either case, they are deceiving themselves. For as the church is but one, and the promises of God are made only to that church; man's *covenanted* title to those promises must depend upon his being a member of it; upon the same principle that those persons only who have been admitted members of a society, have any claim to the privileges of it.

Hence it becomes a matter of importance with every man, to be satisfied whether he really is a member of the church of Christ; for should he not be such, the sincerity of his profession will not supply the deficiency of those privileges and blessings, of which in that case he may not be in a situation to partake.

The Lord, we read, Acts ii. 47. at the first opening of the Apostolic commission, “added daily to the church such as should be saved.” From whence we understand, that admission into the church is no indifferent thing, but a privilege of an important kind. Let men reason, therefore, as they please upon this subject, the counsel of GOD still standeth sure. “Many,” says SOLOMON, “are the devices of a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.” Prov. xix. 21. According to the general tenour of Scripture, from which alone any safe conclusion can be drawn in this matter, it appears, that the only appointed road to heaven lies through the church of CHRIST upon earth. For the church is the spouse of CHRIST, whose office it is to bring forth children unto GOD. And it is from the arms of this spiritual mother, that all the legitimate children of the Father are received. In conformity with which idea was the language of St. AUGUSTINE; where, he says, “He cannot have GOD for his Father, who hath not the Church for his Mother.”

Was this well considered, it might be supposed, that where an event of such importance is at stake, no wise man would venture to make experiments.

To enable the reader to form some correct judgment upon this matter, it is my design to lay before him some plain thoughts on the following important heads:—1st, On the nature, design, and constitution of the Christian church. 2dly, On the sin of schism, or a wilful separation from it. 3dly, On the reasons commonly advanced to justify that separation. And 4thly, On the advantages attendant upon a conscientious communion with the church; together with the disadvantages consequent upon a separation from it. In discoursing upon these subjects, the object is, to enter into them, so far only as may be deemed sufficient for the information of the parties to whom they are immediately addressed.

“ The lips of the priest (we are told) should retain knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of Hosts.” —Mal. ii. 7. Every Christian therefore, before he separates from the church, instead of being governed by his own imagination, or that of some fellow-Christian, not better informed perhaps than himself upon the subject, should give himself an opportunity of knowing from the person, whose office it is to inform him, whether the reasons advanced for his quitting the communion of the church are stronger

than those which are to be produced for his continuing in it. Whoever determines upon a separation from the church, without having made this previous enquiry, cannot be said to do justice, either to himself or to his minister, and must be answerable for the consequence of his neglect.

DISCOURSE II.

*On the Nature, Design, and Constitution of
the CHRISTIAN CHURCH, considered as
a visible Society.*

BEFORE we can be qualified to determine what is wrong, we must have acquired some just and established notion with respect to what is right. An acquaintance therefore with the nature, design, and constitution of the *Christian* church, becomes a necessary preparative to our forming a proper judgment upon the subsequent parts of our subject.

To trace the church through its several progressive stages; from its original establishment in paradise, where the good news of a Saviour was first delivered to fallen man; through its infant condition; and days of contraction in the ark, when it was confined to one single family; to its subsequent enlargement in the descendants of ABRAHAM; its wandering state in the wilderness; and its more complete settlement in the land of Canaan; down to that fulness of time, when our SAVIOUR came in the flesh to visit it; would

lead into too wide a field. It is our happiness, and to that part of the subject our present attention is confined, that we live in that stage of the church, which may be considered as the completion of every former dispensation. JESUS CHRIST, the head of the church, by purging it from the corruptions which it had contracted, and restoring its worship to that spiritual standard in which its perfection consists; has, as it were, put his finishing hand to the establishment of it, upon the plan best calculated to secure the purpose he had in view.

It is a matter therefore of importance, that we should be particular in our observations upon this point; because a deviation from CHRIST's plan, by an attempt to alter the constitution of his church, may make it a very different thing from what it was designed to be; and though, in this case, a man may satisfy himself, by calling the creature of his own imagination the church of CHRIST, it certainly does not follow that it really is such; and it may be the most dangerous piece of self-imposition thus to consider it.

To understand the nature and design of the Christian church, we must consider the world at large as lying in wickedness; and consequently in a state of condemnation before GOD. Out of this wicked

society, of which all are by nature born members, GOD has been pleased to call men into another society, very different from it; the object of which is to minister to their salvation, by so purifying them from the corruptions of a fallen world, that they may not be condemned with it. This society, sometimes called the *Church of Christ*, because CHRIST purchased it with his blood; sometimes his *kingdom*, because he is the king and governor of it; was set up in opposition to that kingdom of this world, which has Satan for its prince. Into this society, or kingdom, persons are admitted by baptism; which is the seal conveying to them an assurance of their future inheritance: by the *regular* application of which, they are sanctified or set apart from the rest of the world, as the peculiar property of the Holy Spirit. Having then, in consequence of their being born anew of the Holy Spirit in baptism, professedly withdrawn themselves from the service of the prince of this world, and entered into that of the living GOD; they become entitled to those privileges, which the King, into whose service they are entered, has purchased for his subjects.

Whilst therefore those who, in their natural condition, “are strangers from the covenant of promise; living without hope and without GOD in the world;”

those who have been translated from the world into the church, may thereby be considered as delivered from the powers of darkness, and become heirs with CHRIST of an eternal kingdom.

The privileges to which the members of the church are entitled, namely, pardon of sin, and eternal life, having been purchased by JESUS CHRIST; the church must of necessity be a society of *his forming*. For no man can take upon himself to form a church; in other words, to call men out of the world, and by incorporating them into a certain society, thereby to invest them with Gospel privileges; for this plain reason, because no man can ensure to the members of a society of his own framing those privileges which he has it not in his power to confer. Every thing, therefore, in this matter, must be done in the name, and by commission from CHRIST; because CHRIST is the fulfiller of that divine engagement, by which alone man is delivered from condemnation with the world, and placed in a state of acceptance with God.

Now nothing can be more obvious to common sense, than that no man can engage for what he is not in a condition to perform, unless particular circumstances authorise him so to do. On the other hand, an engagement entered into on the behalf of

another can be binding only upon the party, by virtue of a *commission* received for that purpose. The application of these two self-evident positions sufficiently point out the difference between those who have received a commission from the Head of the church, to administer the affairs of his spiritual kingdom, and those who have not.

If it be admitted, then, that the church is a society; as such, it must be possessed of power necessary to its own preservation. It must have its rules and orders; and consequently its governors, to carry those rules and orders into effect. Without such a provision for order and government, no society can subsist.

That such a power was left with the church by its Divine Founder, is to be proved from the commission, by which the governors of it received authority to admit members into the church, and to exclude them from it, according to the qualification or disqualification of the respective parties. And that this power comprehended under it every exertion of authority necessary to the regulation of the society committed to their management, we conclude (to avoid multiplying proof upon a subject that speaks for itself) from St. PAUL's charge to his disciples, that they should "obey them that had the rule over them, and

submit themselves;" from the consideration, that their spiritual governors "watched for their souls." Heb. xiii. 17.

Moreover, as there are differences of administrations, and diversities of operations to be performed in the church, there must be persons regularly appointed to the discharge of the several offices, necessary to the well-being of the society to which they belong. But a regular appointment of offices pre-supposes a power lodged some where, to determine upon the qualification of the undertaking parties; for if individuals are left to settle this matter for themselves, the society will not only be worse served for the time being; (the most self-sufficient men being, generally speaking, the least qualified to discharge the office they undertake;) but what is a still further consideration, the disorder consequent upon an indiscriminate exercise of public functions, must ultimately terminate in the dissolution of that society, where such confusion prevails.

But the church being a society, of which CHRIST is the head, from whom alone all the benefits belonging to it are derived; the appointment of the governors, together with the rules and orders by which this society is to be managed and directed, must ori-

ginate with, and receive its sanction from him. For man, merely as man, can claim no rule over his fellow-creatures. Government, therefore, whether in church or state, must look to that supreme Disposer, from whom all power is derived; by whose authority alone the validity of its exertions can be established. The reason of the thing, in this case, we shall find upon enquiry to be confirmed by the history of facts.

When our SAVIOUR, after his resurrection, proceeded to the regular establishment of his church upon earth, he appointed the eleven principal disciples, or Apostles as they are called by way of distinction, to meet him in a mountain in Galilee, for the purpose of delivering his commission and directions to them on that subject. “ Then the eleven disciples (we read) went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where JESUS had appointed them. And JESUS came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach (or make disciples in) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Matth. xxviii. 18.

It is to be observed, that our SAVIOUR's disciples at this time exceeded the number of five hundred. After his resurrection, St. PAUL tells us, that " he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." But our SAVIOUR did not deliver the commission for administering the sacraments of his church to his disciples at large, but only to his Apostles; and to them not by accident, but, it should seem, by *express design*: in the first instance, at his last supper; and in the second, when, in consequence of a particular appointment to meet him in Galilee after his ascension, he delivered to them his final commission to " baptize all nations."

Now the granting a commission manifestly implies, that none but those to whom it has been delivered, have authority to act in that business for which the commission has been granted. Were it otherwise, the commission would be an useless form. CHRIST, therefore, by making choice only of *eleven* out of the whole *number* of his disciples, intended, it is presumed, that the business which he authorized them to do, should not be performed by every one that might think proper to take upon him to execute it.*

* Should there remain a doubt on this head, the particular selection of the eleven Apostles from the other disciples, for the

It is to be remarked further, that the tenour of the commission delivered to the Apostles seems purposely calculated to provide against, and thereby to render unnecessary, all *self-constituted* authority in the church. "As my Father has sent me," said CHRIST, "so send I you;" &c. According to the common import of which words, as well as the received sense of them in the Catholic church, our SAVIOUR is to be understood as if he had said, "With the same power and authority that my Father sent me into the world to constitute and govern my church, I send you and your successors for the further advancement of the same divine purpose; and lo! my spirit shall accompany the regular administration of the office to the end of the world. As therefore, in consequence of the mission which I have received from my Father, I send you; so, by virtue of the mission received from me, you have authority to send others, for the purpose of carrying on and perpetuating the plan which I have set on foot in

purpose of delivering to them their commission, is calculated to remove it. See Luke vi. 12, 13; Mark iii. 13, 14; Matt. x. 1; xxviii. 16, 19, 20; John xx. 21, 22. This important point the reader will find particularly made out, and insisted upon, in "PORTER'S Discourse of Church Government," chap. ii. p. 45, et seq. and chap. iii. p. 61, et seq.

the world, by a regular administration of the affairs of my kingdom to the end of time." The government committed to the Apostles was, therefore, of the same nature with that of CHRIST; for thus he declares to them: "I appoint to you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed to me." Luke xxii. 29. The keys of the kingdom of heaven CHRIST received from God; by virtue of which grant, he had power to remit sins on earth. Matt. ix. 16. These same keys, with the power which belonged to them, were delivered by CHRIST to his Apostles in these words: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." John xx. 23. "The Father (we read, John v. 22, 27) committed all judgment to his Son." And our LORD promised, that when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, the twelve Apostles should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matt. xix. 28. Hence it is, that the Apostles are represented as constituting part of the foundation on which the Christian church was built. "The wall of the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God," the Spirit describes as having *twelve* foundations, and in them "the names of the *twelve Apostles* of the Lamb."

Rev. xxi. 14. And St. PAUL told the Ephesians, that they were “the household of GOD, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief corner-stone.” Eph. ii. 19, 20.

But it may be said, although this commission, delivered to the Apostles, stamps a distinction upon their characters, and evidently invests them with a particular office and authority; yet it does not furnish sufficient light by which to determine the precise constitution of the Christian church. It certainly does not; and were there no other light vouchsafed to us on this subject, we should not speak so decidedly upon it as we now feel ourselves authorised to do.

But, perhaps, more information may be expected in this case than the Bible was designed to furnish. Divine revelation, it is to be observed, was not meant to gratify the curiosity, but to furnish information sufficient to establish the faith, and govern the practice, of the Christian professor. It is not to be supposed, that in the short history given by the Apostles, one thousandth part of the doctrine, or instruction, delivered by our SAVIOUR to his disciples, could be recorded. St. JOHN makes use of a strong expression, where he says, that “if all things which

JESUS did should be written, every one, the world itself could not contain the books that should be written;" thereby giving us to understand, that the histories written by the Apostles furnish but a very short abstract of our SAVIOUR's life and conversation, by no means sufficient to qualify the reader to form a minute and circumstantial judgment, with respect to any particular transaction recorded.

Upon the subject before us, for instance, we have no information but what is derived from the mere recital of the fact; that our SAVIOUR did, after his resurrection, deliver a commission to his eleven disciples, relative to the government of his church. The manner in which this commission was to be carried into effect, is to be ascertained by the subsequent practice of the Apostles; which doubtless conformed to the direction they had received from their Divine Master. For it is not to be supposed, that our SAVIOUR would fail to accompany the delivery of so important a commission with all the information necessary for the parties entrusted with it. Indeed it should seem, as if this were one of the principal objects our SAVIOUR had in view, in remaining so long upon earth after his resurrection; since we are expressly told, that he employed that

time in speaking of the things “*pertaining to the kingdom of God.*” Acts i. 3. If the Apostles have not recorded the directions which accompanied the delivery of their commission, we are not from thence warranted to conclude, that no directions were given; but that they were judged unnecessary to be particularized; for this reason, it may be, because the government of the Christian church was to correspond with that of the Jewish. For the Jewish and Christian church are to be considered, not so much different establishments, as two editions (if we may so say) of the same church of God; the former constituting, as it were, the ground-plan upon which the latter has been built.

Indeed, as the œconomy of man’s salvation forms one complete whole, it is but to be expected, that there should be an uniformity in its several parts; although the modern Christian, by confining his attention to one particular part of the Divine dispensation, is thereby unqualified to trace the resemblance between them.

If God, then, thought proper Himself to regulate the service of the Jewish church, by the express appointment of those who were to bear office in it, it is reasonable to suppose, that He would adopt a

similar plan in the Christian church. Nor is it to be imagined, that He who did all things with regularity and order; who in his own person paid a delicate regard to the ordinances of the old dispensation, which were to be done away; should leave the affairs of his new church only in an irregular and disorderly condition.

The history of the Christian church proves that He has not done so; it being taken for granted, that the practice of the Apostles, in the execution of their commission, will be admitted as authority sufficient to establish this fact. The Apostles, we are told, did not enter upon the discharge of their commission, till they had received the promise of the Father, in the gift of the Holy Ghost. “They were commanded to tarry in Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high.” Luke xxiv. 49. Which power the Apostles actually received at the subsequent day of Pentecost; when, according to our SAVIOUR’s promise, the Holy Ghost visibly descended upon them, as their previous qualification for the discharge of their high office. What form of government, therefore, the Apostles agreed to establish in the church, if not expressly communicated to them by CHRIST in person, must be

considered as established under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, Apostolical practice, with respect to the government of the church, well ascertained, must in this matter be equivalent to Apostolical precept with respect to the doctrine of it; because the Holy Spirit, by whom the Apostles were directed, and whose office it was to teach them all things necessary to the well-being of the Christian church, would not lead them into error in one case more than in the other.

What that form of government was, we shall be at no loss to determine, if we are disposed to enquire fairly into the subject. Indeed, the constitution of the Christian church, as established by the Apostles, may be considered to be sufficiently notorious from their writings, to render particular proof on the subject unnecessary.

But did the conclusion upon this matter stand upon less firm ground than it really does, or were the language of Scripture in this case less clear than it is, the *practice of the primitive church* furnishes such a comment upon it, as must, we should think, determine the judgment of every unprejudiced man.

It is a known axiom, that every law is best explained by the subsequent practice. Let this maxim be applied in the present case.

“ Be ye followers of me, (says ST. PAUL in his directions to the church at Corinth) even as I also am of CHRIST. Now I pray you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them to you.” 1 Cor. xi. 1, 2.

To every careful reader of the New Testament, it will evidently appear, that the Apostles were the followers of CHRIST in the administration of his kingdom on earth; no act of power being done by our LORD in the flesh, which was not, at least in some degree, exercised by the Apostles after his ascension. Their prescribing rules and ordinances for the church, and enforcing them by suitable punishments; their judging and condemning transgressors, and their pardoning and absolving penitents; their ordaining ministers, and superintending the discharge of their ministerial duty; together with the obedience and attendance paid to the Apostles by the inferior ministers; are circumstances, which prove, that the government of the infant church was in their hands: and that it was managed by them on the plan now distinguished by the word *Episcopal*. From Apostolical authority descending to Catholic practice, which (as Bishop TAYLOR* has observed) “ is the

* “ Of the Sacred Order of Episcopacy.” Sect. 22.

next basis of the power and order of Episcopacy," we are as well assured as we can be of any historical fact whatever, that TIMOTHY, TITUS, IGNATIUS, POLYCARP, CLEMENS ROMANUS, and others, the immediate disciples of the Apostles, did exercise the Episcopal office, for substance the same as it is now exercised, in that branch of the Christian church established in this country. From which circumstance we feel ourselves warranted in concluding, that such was the government originally settled in the church; because it is not to be supposed, that those who lived with the Apostles, who exercised the office they had received in the church by virtue of their appointment, and in some measure under their superintendance, could deviate from the plan laid down by the Apostles, whom they considered as acting under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit. For if it can be supposed, that the immediate disciples of the Apostles did not know the minds of their teachers, or that their practice was not strictly conformable to it; or "if it is imaginable that the whole world should, immediately after the death of the Apostles, conspire together, to seek themselves, and not the things that are of JESUS CHRIST, to erect a government of their own desiring,

not ordained by CHRIST, not delivered by his Apostles; and to relinquish a divine foundation, and the Apostolical superstructure, which, if it was at all, was a part of our Master's will;"* we may suppose and imagine any thing; and there is no ground left, upon which any conclusive reasoning on this subject can be built.

But "what need we," said a judicious writer, who had paid particular attention to this subject, and whose writings have been frequently referred to as a standard of judgment in church matters; "what need we," said he, "to seek for proofs, that the Apostles, who began their order of regiment by bishops, did it not but by Divine instinct; when, without such direction, things of far less weight and moment they attempted not? PAUL and BARNABAS did not open their mouths unto the Gentiles, till the Spirit had said, 'Separate me PAUL and BARNABAS for the work whereunto I have sent them.' The eunuch, by PHILIP, was neither baptized nor instructed, before the angel of GOD was sent to give him notice, that so it pleased the MOST HIGH. In Asia, PAUL and the rest were silent, because the Spirit

* TAYLOR, "Of the sacred Order and Office of Episcopacy." Section 22.

forbad them to speak. When they intended to have seen Bythinia, they stayed their journey, the Spirit not giving them leave to go. Before TIMOTHY was employed in those Episcopal affairs of the church, about which the Apostle PAUL used him, the HOLY GHOST gave special charge for his ordination; and propheticall intelligence, more than once, what success the same would have. And shall we think, that JAMES was made bishop of Jerusalem, EVODIUS bishop of the church of Antioch, the angels in the churches of Asia bishops; that bishops every where were appointed to take away factious contentions and schisms; without some like divine instigation and direction of the HOLY GHOST? Wherefore let us not fear to be herein bold and peremptory; that if any thing in the church's regiment, surely the first institution of bishops was from heaven, was even of GOD; the HOLY GHOST was the author of it." HOOKER'S Ecc. Pol. book vii. If we say then, that in every church that was planted, the offices of bishop, priest, and deacon, answering to those of high-priest, priest, and Levite, under the law, were to be found, we shall say no more than the history of the primitive church will warrant. It being certain that the œconomy of the

Christian church corresponded as nearly to that of her elder sister the Jewish church, as the different nature of their respective services would permit. Indeed, from the parallel subsisting between the law and the Gospel, the one being considered as the type or figure of the other, it was no uncommon thing for the primitive fathers, in speaking of the government of the Christian church, to argue from the distinctive offices in the Levitical priesthood, to a similar distinction in the Christian. “CHRIST and his Apostles, (says the learned HICKES) who were the reformers of the Jewish œconomy into the Christian church, did build with many of the old materials, and conformed their new house, as much as they could, after the platform of the old. This will appear from baptism itself, which was a ceremony by which proselytes, both men, women, and children, were initiated into the Jewish church; which ceremony our SAVIOUR consecrated in the place of that of circumcision, to be the sacrament of initiation into his church; and a seal of the righteousness of faith.* So likewise the other sacrament of the LORD’S Supper was certainly of Jewish original, as

* SELDEN de jure, l. ii. c. 2.; de Synedr. l. i. c. 3.—LIGHTFOOT *Horæ Hebraicæ*, p. 42.—HAMMOND ON MATTH. iii. 1.—JACOB ALTINGIUS de Proselytis.

hath been shewed by many learned men;† and the correspondence of the bishops, presbyters, and deacons, to the high-priest, priests, and Levites, doth shew, that the subordination of the Christian hierarchy is taken from the Jewish church; as ST. JEROME observes in his epistle to EVAGRIUS, “ what the high-priest, priests, and Levites were in the temple, that the bishops, presbyters, and deacons are in the church, according to the apostolical constitution taken from the Old Testament.” “ Et ut sciamus traditiones Apostolicas sumptas de veteri Testamento, quod AARON, et filii ejus, et Levitæ in templo fuerunt; hoc sibi episcopi et presbyteri et diaconi vendicent in ecclesia.”‡

Thus, in correspondence with the same established idea, St. CLEMENT, one of the first bishops, a fellow

† MEDE, 1 book, disc. 51, 6, 11.—GROT. Opusc. tom. iii. p. 519. CUDWORTH on the LORD's Supper.—THORNDIKE, c. 10.—Dr. TAYLOR's “ Great Exemplar;” p. 1; Discourse of Baptism.

‡ The reader will find a masterly illustration of the connection between the Jewish œconomy and Christian church, (a subject necessary to be understood by all Christian divines, who, according to our SAVIOUR's description of the doctor “ rightly instructed unto the kingdom of God;” should be like unto an householder, “ who bringeth out of his storehouse new things and old:”) in the discourse previous to the “ Case of Baptism, by the very learned Dean of WORCESTER.” See London Cases, No. 15.

labourer with St. PAUL, writes to the members of the church at Corinth, for the express purpose of pressing upon them the duty of ecclesiastical subordination and obedience. “To the high-priest,” says he, “were allotted his proper offices; to the priests their proper place was assigned; and to the Levites their services were appointed; and the laymen were restrained within the precepts of laymen.”

Now were there no familiarity at that time acknowledged between the Jewish œconomy and Christian church; were there no offices in the latter corresponding with those of high-priest, priest, and Levite, in the former; the force of argument, otherwise to be deduced from the application in this case, must have been totally lost upon the parties to whom it was addressed.

But upon appeal to St. PAUL's writings we find, that part of the charge delivered to TIMOTHY, appointed bishop of the church in Ephesus, was, that “he should lay hands suddenly on no man;” that he should receive no accusation against a presbyter, but before two or three witnesses; and that the deacons in his church should be men of sober and orderly conversation. Here, then, we have the form of the Christian church, after the model drawn out

by the Apostles themselves, with its officers distinguished by their respective stations; the bishop, as supreme governor, answering to the high-priest under the law; the presbyters and deacons to the priests and Levites, as subordinate ministers in it. And by an appeal to ecclesiastical history it will be found, that immediately from the death of the Apostles, or a very few years after, the government of the Christian church throughout the world was in every part of it settled upon this same Apostolic plan.

Under this form of government has the church continued, from the days of the Apostles down to the present time; and, doubtless, will continue so to the end, whatever occasional interruptions it has met with, or may still meet with from the prevailing passions and prejudices of sinful men. “For it is impossible,” we are told, “but that offences will come;” and “there must be heresies; that they which are approved may be made manifest.” LUKE xvii. 1; 1 Cor. xi. 19.

Should further testimony in favour of the government of the church, as here described, be necessary, we are furnished with what must be deemed direct to the purpose, in the writings of ST. CLEMENT above-mentioned; where he says, in his first epistle

to the Corinthians, that “ the Apostles knowing of the LORD JESUS, that contests would arise concerning the Episcopal name, (or order) and for this cause having perfect fore-knowledge (of these things,) they did ordain those whom we have mentioned before; and moreover did establish the constitution, that other approved men should succeed them who died in their office and ministry.”

Thus then, upon the authority of ST. PAUL, who was called to be an Apostle by JESUS CHRIST, together with that of ST. CLEMENT, who was a bishop within forty years after our LORD's resurrection, and who, as living with the Apostles, must have been made acquainted with the constitution of the church over which he was appointed to preside; supported by the consideration of that uniform system of government which has prevailed in the church from the beginning, we are warranted in determining; that where we find the order of bishops, priests, and deacons regularly appointed, there we find the church of CHRIST according to its original constitution; and without these (to make use of the words of ST. IGNATIUS, who it is to be observed was the disciple of ST. JOHN) it is not called a church. “ Let all,” says this holy man, “ reverence the deacons,

as the ministers of JESUS CHRIST; and in like manner the bishop, as JESUS CHRIST, the Son of the Father; the presbyters, as the senate of GOD, and college of Apostles; without these, it is not called a church."

From whence the obvious conclusion is, that the Church is not merely a number of people, agreeing in the same articles of faith, or in the same acts of religious worship; but it is moreover a society, holding one visible communion under the same divinely-instituted government: a society, not of *man's* but of *Christ's* forming; a society or spiritual incorporation, of which He is the head, and all individual Christians, who have been regularly admitted into it, the members. For the church is not a creature of the fancy, deriving an imaginary existence from the whim and caprice of man, but a settled and permanent establishment, the work of Divine Wisdom. It is, moreover, not hid in a corner, that men need be at a loss to find it; but a visible society, possessed of those characteristic marks, by which it may at all times be known. Like all other societies composed of fallible men, it has, indeed, been deformed by corruptions and abuses; but corruptions and abuses affect not

the nature and constitution of the church itself, but the parties only by whom they have been occasioned.

To form a proper judgment, therefore, upon this subject, recourse must be had to those records which contain an account of the original plan, upon which the church was established by its Divine Founder. In them we find, that every figure under which it is described, has application, not to a confused multitude of men independent of each other, but to a regular society under an appointed government. It is “a body having many members, of which CHRIST is the head.” It is “a kingdom of which CHRIST is the king.” It is “a family,” of which CHRIST is the master. It is “a building fitly framed together, built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief corner-stone.” It is the fold of sheep, of which JESUS CHRIST is the shepherd. All which several descriptions lead to the same general idea of association, order, and agreement, subsisting among the several members of the church, considered as parts of the same body; in consequence of which, they regularly discharge their respective offices, continuing in constant dependence upon the Head, from whence their power of life and action is derived.

Such then is the nature and constitution of the church, as it was originally established by its Supreme Head; from whom the Apostles, and their successors the bishops, have derived their commission; a branch of that commission which JESUS CHRIST received from his FATHER; by virtue of which they challenge obedience from every member of the Christian church, as to the stewards or chief officers in that spiritual society, over which they are authorised to preside. And such must be the conclusion upon this subject, unless we suppose, either that the Apostles understood not the nature of the commission with which they were entrusted, or that for the sake of aggrandizing their own characters, they wilfully misrepresented it.

DISCOURSE III.

Of the Sin of SCHISM.

THE circumstance of the church being *a society of CHRIST's forming*, for the regular administration of the affairs of his kingdom, “for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of CHRIST,” Eph. iv. 12, points out the nature and quality of the sin of SCHISM.

The word translated *Schism*,* which in modern language scarce seems to have an appropriate idea annexed to it, is in the original derived from a *verb*,

* The word *Schism* (according to the learned HAMMOND) comes from the passive verb, *σχίζομαι*, which regularly signifies being cut, or divided; but yet the sin of schism being an action upon himself, not a passion from any other, it was of the nature of those passives which note reciprocal action, or passion; which ST. JUDE fully expresses by *αποδιρίζοντες εαυτους*, the title which he gives the grand Gnostick Schismatics, that they cut off or divide themselves from the church. HAMMOND, therefore, understands the passive verb, in this case, to be of the nature of the Hebrew Hithpael, which denotes reciprocal action; which he considers to be very useful to set down the true notion of *schism*, as it differs from all other things that border on it, particularly from *excommunication*, which is the cutting

which signifies to cut, divide, or separate; it must, therefore, relate to some body capable of being divided or separated. Upon reference to the first chapter of ST. PAUL's Epistle to the Ephesians, we find that the church is called the body, of which CHRIST is the head. "The GOD of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," saith the Apostle, "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body."

The church then, in the figurative language of Scripture, is the body of CHRIST. Upon further reference to the twelfth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, we find the same Apostle arguing, from the connection which subsists between the members of the natural body, to the necessity of a similar connection subsisting between the members of the spiritual body. That no schism, no division or separation, should take place in one body more than in the other. "For," saith the Apostle,* "as the natural body is one, and hath many members, and all

off *others* from the church; whereas ST. PAUL, speaking of the heretical Gnostics, which were schismatics too, saith that they were *αυτοκατακρίτοι*, such as condemned and excommunicated themselves; which is as perfect an evidence of the reciprocal action or passion, as could be.—HAMMOND'S Works, vol. ii. Answer to Schism disarmed; p. 69, 70.

* 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is CHRIST, (or the church of CHRIST, considered as that body, of which individual Christians are the members.) For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body." And the intention of our being thus baptized into this one body, or church of CHRIST, is, as the Apostle* elsewhere informs us, that we should "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man; unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST: That we should not, like children, be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, might grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even CHRIST; from whom the whole body," of the church, "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

From whence it appears, that one great object in the establishment of the church upon earth was, that

* Ephes. iv. 13, 14, &c.

it might become one great comprehensive society continually increasing in numbers and in strength; a firm, compact, indissoluble body, so fitly joined together, and connected by the harmony of its component parts, as thereby to be best calculated to produce glory to God, and love among men.

“ The church (says Bishop GROVE, in his discourse on Church Communion) is a body of men, separated from the rest of the world, or called out of the world, (as the word *εκκαλειν*, to call out, from whence *Ecclesia* is derived, signifies) united to God and themselves by a divine covenant. The church is united to God, for it is a religious society instituted for the worship of God; and they are united among themselves, and to each other, because it is but one body, which requires an union of all its parts. This union with God, and to each other, which constitutes a church, is made by divine covenant. For the Christian church is nothing else but such a society of men, as is in covenant with God through CHRIST.” Now as no covenant can *originally* be made for God, but *by God himself*; it hence follows, that *God only* can make or constitute a church.

From this description of the church, as the body of CHRIST, the term *schism*, in its application to it,

denotes a division among the members of which that body is composed; occasioned by a want of obedience to the government which CHRIST, by his Apostles, settled in the church; and a consequent separation from its communion, in contradiction to the divine plan of its establishment; the design of which was, that all Christians should be joined together in the same mind, and in the same worship; “continuing,” according to the primitive pattern, “in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts ii. 42.

Such is the nature and quality of schism; which sin consists in its being a direct violation of the order and government established in the church, thereby constituting a species of rebellion against its Divine Founder.

Indeed as the word *church*, through the modern confusion of language, is understood to be applicable to all societies of professing Christians, by what authority and under what teachers soever they may be assembled, there can be no such sin as that of *schism* in the world. For the sin of schism pre-supposes the establishment of a certain society by Divine authority, with which all Christians are obliged to communicate. Now if the church, instead of being a society esta-

blished under a particular government, for the purpose of Christians living in communion with it, is any thing, and every thing that men please to make it, a separation from it becomes impracticable; because a society must have acquired some regular and collected form, before a separation from it can take place. But upon the supposition that every society of professing Christians is the church of CHRIST; the church, in that case, consists of as many separate societies under different forms, as there are fanciful men to make them; and, consequently, is no longer in that collected state, in which it is possible to live in communion with it. For before the members of the church can live in communion with each other, the church, as a society, must be at unity in itself.

To determine upon the legality or illegality of a practice, from man's opinion concerning it, is to set up a standard of judgment which is perpetually varying, and on that account ever liable to deceive. Christians, in religious matters at least, have a more sure word than that of man to depend upon; if they are wise, therefore, they will not suffer themselves to be governed by a lesser authority, when they have a greater at hand always to direct them. Custom has, indeed, so far reconciled us to the divisions that have

taken place among Christians, that they are no longer seen in the light in which they were seen in the primitive days of the church; whilst charity, forbidding us to speak harshly of the spiritual condition of our brethren, has in a manner tended to efface the sin of schism from our minds. But though we presume to judge no man, leaving all judgment to that Being who is alone qualified to make allowance for the ignorance, invincible prejudice, imperfect reasonings, and mistaken judgments of his frail creatures; yet must it not from hence be concluded, that it is a matter of indifference, whether Christians communicate with the church or not; or that there is a doubt upon the subject of schism, whether it be a sin or not.

“ There is one plain rule to direct all men in this enquiry; that wherever there is a church established by public authority, if there be nothing sinful in its constitution and worship, we are bound to communicate with that church, and to reject the communion of all other parties and sects of Christians. For the advantage always lies on the side of authority. No publick establishment can justify sinful communion; but if there be nothing sinful in the communion of the national church, which is established by publick authority, to separate from such a church, is both diso-

bedience to the supreme authority in the state, and a schism from the church.” “ Now (proceeds the Bishop, in another part of his discourse) if *schism* be an innocent thing, and the true Catholic spirit, (as from the present too prevailing practice among Christians we might be induced to think it was) I have no more to say, but that the whole Christian church, ever since the Apostles’ times, has been in a very great mistake. But if schism be a very great sin, and that which will, according to the judgment of the primitive church, damn us as soon as adultery and murder, then it must be a dangerous thing to communicate with schismatics.”*

Indeed, with respect to the reality and heinous quality of this sin of *schism*, it scarcely seems possible for Christians, who enter sufficiently deep into the subject, to entertain two opinions.

Looking into the writings of St. PAUL, I see schism spoken of as a *carnal sin*; and that this sin consists in a separation from the communion, and a setting up of teachers independent of the government, and destructive of the unity of the Christian church. A sin, which, besides its being the parent of confusion

* Discourse of Church Communion, by Bishop GROVE. See London Cases, No. 1.

and disorder in the church, is moreover destructive of that charity or brotherly love, by which it was designed that Christians should be joined together.

In the epistle of ST. JUDE mention is made of those who “perished in the *gainfaying of CORE*,” even those who *separated* themselves, being sensual, having not the Spirit. From whence it is to be concluded, that there is a sin in the Christian church, answering to that of KORAH in the Jewish; some resemblance, consequently, there must be between the two churches, to justify, in this case, the Apostle’s application: for if there were not, the method adopted by the Apostles and primitive writers, of making the law minister to the explanation of the Gospel, by considering the former as the intended type of the latter, (a complete specimen of which we are presented with in the Epistle to the Hebrews) would have been calculated, not so much to inform as to lead their disciples into error.

By referring to the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers, we find in what the sin of KORAH consisted. KORAH conformed to the law, the doctrine, and worship, which GOD had appointed; for we do not read that there was any dispute upon either of these points. But KORAH, being a priest of an

inferior order, wanted to encroach upon the authority of AARON the high-priest, and to continue no longer under subjection to him. The sin, therefore, of KORAH consisted in his rebelling against the order of government established in that church, of which he was an inferior minister. An order of government, therefore, must exist in the Christian church, against which it is a sin to rebel; otherwise the sin of KORAH, described in the Old Testament, and the gainsaying of Core, mentioned by ST. JUDE,* cannot constitute parallel cases.

That a particular order of government has been established in the Christian church, an unanswerable proof has been already brought from the writings of ST. PAUL,† where he calls upon the members of the church “to obey those that had the rule over them, and to submit themselves.” To give force, therefore, to the Apostle’s injunction in this case, spiritual governors there must be in the church, to whose authority submission is required. In withdrawing, therefore, that submission, in consequence of certain self-sufficient ministers of an inferior order setting themselves up as heads and leaders of separate congregations, independent of their respective bishops,

* Epist. of JUDE, 11.

† Heb. xiii. 17.

the sin of schism in the Christian church, corresponding with that of KORAH and his associates, alluded to by ST. JUDE, originally consisted.

The light in which this sin was seen in the primitive days of the church, makes it a subject of serious consideration. The Apostles, and those who lived with them, could not be mistaken upon this point. Knowing what the constitution of that church was, over which they were commissioned to preside, they must know in what the sin of those persons consisted, who set themselves up in opposition to it. An appeal, therefore, to their writings in this case must afford unanswerable evidence to all who are open to conviction.

What ST. PAUL and ST. JUDE have said upon it has been already remarked. To which the testimony of ST. JOHN may be added, where, in his third epistle, he speaks of one DIOTREPHES, who, in the true spirit of KORAH, "loving to have the pre-eminence,"* created a division among the brethren, by not submitting himself to ST. JOHN, who was his superior in the church. And whatever different interpretations, with the view of favouring different opinions, have been put upon the Apostolic writings, evidence is to be produced from the primitive writers

* 3 JOHN 9.

of the church so decisive, as to take away all reasonable ground for dispute on this subject.

It will be sufficient to produce one of these writers; because, if his authority, direct to this point, be not sufficient to determine the opinion of every reasonable man, all further appeal becomes unnecessary. The writer here meant is ST. IGNATIUS, one of the first bishops and martyrs of the church, 'who lived with the Apostles, and was a disciple of ST. JOHN; a circumstance, which, it is presumed, places his testimony in the most unexceptionable point of view; because, what he has written must, in fairness of construction, be considered as expressing the sense of the Apostles; his authority, consequently, becomes equal to theirs upon this subject.

Thus then, in one part of his writings, he admonishes those whom he addresses, "to beware of the poison of seducers;" by whom were meant the schismatics, or those who separated from the church in those times; for, continues this holy man, "he is without, who does any thing without the bishop and presbytery and deacon, and such an one is defiled in his conscience."*

* Ο δὲ ἐκ τῶν ὧν, ὅτος ἐστὶν ὁ χωρὶς τῆς Ἐπισκοπῆς, καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν Διακόνων τι πράσσων ὁ τοῖστος μέμιαται τῇ συνείδησει. IGN.
Epist. to the Trallians.

In another part of his writings, referring to the obedience due from all orders in the church to the bishops, this holy man speaks thus: “Flee divisions, as the beginning of evils; all of you follow your bishops, as JESUS CHRIST, the Father; and the presbyters, as the Apostles; and reverence the deacons as the institution of God. Let no man do any thing of what appertains to the church without the bishop. Let that sacrament be judged effectual and firm which is dispensed by the bishop, or him to whom the bishop has committed it. Wherever the bishop is, there let the people be. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptise, or celebrate the offices; but whensoever it may be approved of by him, according to the good pleasure of God; that every thing ye do may be firm and safe.”*

Again, speaking of those who act without the bishop, he observes, “As CHRIST did nothing with-

* Τα σχίσματα φευγετε ως αρχην κακων. Παντες τω Επισκοπῳ ακολουθετε ως Κριςτος Ιησους τῳ Πατρι, καὶ τῳ Πρεσβυτεριῳ ως τοις Αποστολοις; τῆς δε Διακονας εντρεπεσθε, ως Θεου εντολην. Μηδεις χωρις Επισκοπου τι πρασσω των ανηκοντων εις την εκκλησιαν· εκεινα βεβαια ευχαριστια ηγεισθω, ἢ υπο του Επισκοπου ἢ αν αυτος επιτρεψη. Οτε αν φανη ο Επισκοπος, εκει το πληθος εστω. Ουκ εξον εστι χωρις του Επισκοπου, ἢτε βαπτιζειν, ἢτε δοξην επιτελειν. Αλλ’ οταν εκεινω δοκη καὶ ευαρεσησιν Θεου, ινα ασφαλες ἢ καὶ βεβαιον παν ο αν’ πρασσητε.—
IGNAT. Epist. to the Smyrnæans.

out his Father, so neither do ye, whether presbyter, deacon, or laick, any thing without the Bishop.”*

“ Give heed to your Bishop, that God may hearken to you: my soul for theirs who subject themselves under the obedience of their bishop, presbyters, and deacons; and let me take my lot with them in the LORD.”

The foregoing passages, to which others might be added, from the writings of IGNATIUS, speak so plainly and decidedly in favour of the government established in the church, and so directly in condemnation of all separation from it, that a particular comment upon them is unnecessary. They speak a plain language, expressive of the sentiments of the holy men who lived in the Apostolic age; and the general conclusion from them is, that whoever was in communion with the bishop, the supreme governor of the church upon earth, was in communion with CHRIST, the head of it; and whoever was not in communion with the bishop, was thereby cut off from

* “ Ὡςπερ καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἀνευ τοῦ Πατρὸς οὐδὲν ποιεῖ, ἕτω καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀνευ τοῦ Ἐπισκοποῦ, μηδὲ Πρεσβυτέρου, μηδὲ Διακόνου, μηδὲ ὁ λαϊκός.”—IGNAT. Epist. to the Magnes.

“ Τῷ Ἐπισκοπῷ προσεχέτε, ἵνα καὶ ὁ Θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀντιψύχῃ, ἐγὼ τῶν ὑποτασσομένων ζῶν Ἐπισκοπῷ, Πρεσβυτέρῳ, Διακονοῖς· μετ’ αὐτῶν μοι τὸ μέρος γένοιτο εἶναι παρὰ Θεοῦ.”—Epist. to POLYCARP.

communion with CHRIST; and that sacraments not administered by the bishop, or those commissioned by him, were not only ineffectual to the parties, but moreover, like the offerings of KORAH, provocations against the LORD.

If, then, the constitution of the Christian church be the same now that it was in the days of the Apostles, (and if it be not, the time when, and the authority by which, an alteration was produced in it, should be ascertained) the sin of schism, however we may attempt to palliate it, is precisely the same sin it then was. And if the primitive writers of the church spoke so decidedly upon this subject, with a view of guarding its members against so heinous a sin, where it respected chiefly the separation of inferior ministers from the jurisdiction of their respective bishops; what would they have said upon it, had they lived to mark the extent to which this sin is carried in the days in which we live? If they considered schism, as it was then practised, as the greatest of all crimes, because it directly counteracted the Divine plan in the establishment of the church; what language would they have found sufficiently strong to express their abhorrence of that Babel of confusion, which now prevails in the Christian world? If the

preservation of the government of the church constituted an object of that importance in their eyes, as to subject any the least opposition to it to their severest censure; what must they have thought of that licentious practice, which leads to its total dissolution? when, in consequence of all ideas respecting the nature of the church having been in a great measure lost among us, men look not beyond themselves for that commission, by which they presume to enter upon the ministry of holy things; drawing congregations after them, and thereby dividing Christian professors into as many sects and parties, as there are self-sufficient teachers to be found, who have an end to answer, or a passion to gratify, upon the occasion.

The opinions of the present day, unhappily for us, tend to countenance a general dissolution of establishments; as if men are different creatures now from what they were in any former state of the world; and grown too wise, in this age of reason, as it is called, to submit to any ordinances that have not received the sanction of their own immediate appointment.

But if it be true, that CHRIST formed only one church, there can be but one communion in it; and if that church be a visible society, distinctly known by its ministers and sacraments, as it most certainly

is, a wilful separation from it must be rebellion against the Divine ordinance, whenever it takes place. For ignorance with respect to the nature of the Christian church, can make no alteration in the plan upon which Divine Wisdom has formed it: consequently schism, or a separate communion from that church, must, whatever ideas of prejudice or error may prevail on the subject, be an heinous sin in the eyes of God.

To form a proper judgment upon this subject, we must not be governed by the opinions and practices of the world upon it; because it ever has been the misfortune of the world, to be more fond of its own inventions than of God's commands. And there is this obvious reason for it; what man invents has a more strict correspondence with the corrupt inclinations of his depraved nature, than what God ordains: and hence it is, that we are so readily induced to substitute human imaginations in the place of Divine institutions. The one are creatures of our own, and tend in a greater or less degree to the gratification of our humours and passions; the other, as controlling our inclinations, and abridging our liberty, are on that account less welcome to the natural man.

To deal honestly with ourselves, therefore, we should place this subject upon the ground on which

it ought to stand. By proceeding thus, we shall find that one great object in the establishment of the church, was to unite men by the bond of charity in constant communion with God and each other; that by entering upon a life of peace, of love, and fellowship with the Holy Ghost upon earth, the members of it might be prepared for that more perfect state provided for them in a better world.

A church, the members of which were to be thus joined together in Christian fellowship, presented a picture of too heavenly a society for the grand enemy of mankind to behold without envy; and which, if suffered to continue in a perfect state, would most certainly tend to render those beings happy, whom, from the creation of the world, it has been the constant employment of this *destroyer*, as he is emphatically called, to render miserable. From the moment, therefore, that the church was founded upon earth, the malice of this evil one has been directed against it. And it not being in his power to destroy the church, (the Divine Founder of it having expressly declared, that the gates of hell shall not finally prevail against it) his next object has been to render it as ineffectual to the purpose of its establishment as pos-

fible; by sowing the seeds of division where only those of love and harmony were designed to grow.

Herein, then, consists the nature of schism; and such is the origin of it: it proceeds, for the most part, from that spirit of pride and independence, which cast the devil out of heaven; and which, it is to be feared, will disqualify many for admission into that blessed place. And the heinousness of the sin consists in this, that it is not only a system of opposition to the Divine will, but that, so far as it prevails, it counteracts the gracious purpose which CHRIST had in view in the establishment of his church; by dividing and separating those members, which it was his design to unite by an harmonious interchange of service and fellowship.

Wherever, then, there is a *wilful separation* from the communion of the church of CHRIST, there, according to the original idea upon this subject, a division of CHRIST's mystical body takes place; and there this sin of schism is to be found.

Such, then, being the nature and consequences of schism, we cannot be surprised at finding the Apostles and primitive writers making use of such strong language, whenever it became the subject of consideration; with the view of guarding their disciples against what

appeared to them, and what, it should be supposed, must appear to every one who duly considers the nature of CHRIST's church, to be a sin of the most dangerous kind; because, to omit lesser considerations, it is a sin, whereby a man cuts himself off from the means of grace, and exposeth himself to the danger of denying the faith. A learned divine* of the last century, who lived to see the effects of this sin fully exemplified in the complete destruction of his own church and country, after having collected the numberless striking passages from the writings of the ancient fathers relative to this subject, thus concludes upon it: "It is but a small part (says he) of the character of *schism*, that it is contrary to faith, contrary to charity, and to all the advantages which belong to a member of the church—the benefits of prayer and sacraments; that it is as bad as heresy, and that there never was any heresy in the church which was not founded in it; and that it is constantly forced, in its own defence, to conclude in some heresy or other: each of these particulars, and all of them taken together, are but a small part of the character which the ancient fathers of the church give us of the sin of schism."

It would draw out this discourse into an inconvenient length, were I to bring forward one-tenth part of what has been written upon this subject, by those who saw it in the same light in which it was seen by the learned divine just mentioned. One additional quotation from Archbishop SHARP shall, therefore, suffice for our present purpose.

“ If human conjectures (says the Archbishop) about the reasons and causes of Divine judgments may be allowed, it will appear from history and experience, that there has been as much war and blood-shed caused in the world, as many nations desolated, as many churches ruined, by the malignity and evil influence of this sin of schism, as any other. And if ever God in judgment shall think fit to give over this flourishing church of ours as a prey to its enemies, we shall have good reason to believe, that the unnecessary divisions and quarrels among ourselves had a great hand in bringing on the judgment.”

It must seem strange to a modern Christian, that a sin, of which the world now appears to know nothing, should be thus described. He will be apt to conclude, either that the church of the present day must be a very different society from what it once was, or that the old writers upon this subject were

wonderfully mistaken in their opinion. But if he be a wise man, he will consider, that should what has been said upon this subject be true, his past ignorance upon it cannot possibly make it otherwise. He will consequently think it to be his duty to bring the matter to a fair examination, and suffer his judgment to be determined by the evidence.

“ The sum of all (to make use of the words of Bishop GROVE) is in short this. Besides these men who justify their separation from the Church of England by charging her with requiring sinful terms of communion, (which is the only thing that can justify their separation, if it could be proved;) there are others who separate lightly and wantonly, for want of a due sense of the nature of church communion, and our obligations to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. They have no notion at all of a church, or no notion of *one church*, or know not wherein the unity and communion of this church consists: and these men think it is indifferent, whether they communicate with any church at all; or that they secure themselves from schism, by communicating sometimes with one church, and sometimes with another; that they may choose their church according to their own fancies, and change them

again whenever their humour alters. But I hope, whoever considers carefully what I have now writ, and attends to those passionate exhortations of the Gospel to peace, and unity, and brotherly love, which cannot be preserved *but in one communion*, which is the unity of the body of CHRIST, and the peace and love of fellow-members; will not only heartily pray to the God of Peace, to restore peace and unity to his church, but be careful how he divides the church himself; and will use his utmost endeavours to heal the present schisms and divisions of the church of CHRIST.”*

* Should my reader wish to see the subject of Church Communion more fully handled, he will not fail to meet with complete satisfaction, by reference to a discourse, entitled “A Persuasive to Communion with the Church of England,” by Dr. GROVE, bishop of Chichester, to be met with among the “*London Cases*.” And should he be desirous of having the ground on which the two preceding chapters stand, more firmly established, (should such additional establishment be judged necessary) I can refer him to no publication, in which he will find more information on church matters brought into a smaller compass, than in “LESLEY’S Discourse concerning the Qualifications requisite to administer the Sacraments:” the supplement to which presents him with a summary detail of authorities for Episcopacy, taken out of the Fathers and Councils in the first four hundred and fifty years after CHRIST: a detail, which appears to leave nothing undone, that human evidence is capable of doing, for the satisfaction of every intelligent reader on this subject.

From the first settlement of the city in 1630 to the present time, the history of Boston is a record of growth and progress. The city has been the center of many important events in the history of the United States, and its people have played a leading part in the development of the nation. The city has been the seat of many of the most important movements of the time, and its people have been the leaders of many of the most important reforms. The city has been the center of many of the most important movements of the time, and its people have been the leaders of many of the most important reforms. The city has been the center of many of the most important movements of the time, and its people have been the leaders of many of the most important reforms.

DISCOURSE IV.

On the Reasons generally advanced to justify a Separation from the Church;—and first, on the supposed Spiritual Qualification of the Party undertaking the Office of the Ministry.

HAVING dispatched the two leading parts of our subject, which respect the constitution of the church, considered as the body of CHRIST, and the nature of schism or wilful separation from it; we proceed to consider the reasons generally advanced to justify that separation. For at the same time that men scruple not to commit the sin, they feel unwilling to acknowledge themselves sinners; and are therefore industrious in finding out pleas, of one kind or another, which may tend, if not to do away, at least to make the sin sit easy upon their minds. Hence it is, that, in the present day, we have so many definitions of schism, differing more or less from the sense originally and properly annexed

to that word, through which the definers for the most part impose on themselves and others; excluding themselves by the fallacy of words, from the apparent commission of that sin, which at the same time actually attaches to their case.

The first and most general plea advanced upon this occasion respects the holiness, or spiritual qualification, of the party who undertakes the office of the ministry. This is neither more nor less than the plea of KORAH revived. The popular argument in the mouth of KORAH was, that "AARON took too much upon himself; seeing that all the congregation was holy;" the inference from which seems to be, that the people had no need of the ministration of AARON, but could minister unto themselves. Upon this plea, the offspring of spiritual pride, KORAH and his company gathered themselves together against MOSES and AARON; and the sixteenth chapter of the book of Numbers has recorded the fatal event that terminated the contest.

But had we no lesson of experience upon this head to draw from the Jewish history, that of our own has taught us to view this plea with a very suspicious eye; because it has been ministerial to the greatest calamities. We remember, that it was in the reign

of the *Saints*, as they were *then* called, the invaders of the priesthood in those days of confusion, that the Constitution of this country was completely overturned in the last century; when preaching, and fasting, and praying, were made use of as convenient cloaks for rebellion, sacrilege, and murder. We are therefore afraid, when we hear talk of *gifted men*, lest an increase of their number should lead to a repetition of the same dismal scenes.

But granting that the *holiness* of the party, on whose account many feel themselves justified in separating from the church, was really such as they think it to be; it does not authorise the possessor of it to take upon himself an office to which he has not been regularly appointed.

Our SAVIOUR, it will be allowed, possessed holiness in a *superlative* degree; for “to him,” we read, “the Spirit was not given by measure.” JOHN iii. 34. But our SAVIOUR “glorified not himself to be made an high-priest;” but He that said unto him “Thou art my son.” Heb. v. “This honour (says the Apostle) *no man taketh unto himself*, but he that is called of GOD, as was AARON.” Now AARON was called by an *outward* call from GOD, communicated to him through the medium of MOSES; from

whom, as God's prime minister, he received a formal appointment to his high office before all the people. EXOD. xxviii. And from the circumstance of our blessed SAVIOUR delivering the commission for collecting and governing his church, not to his disciples at large, but to his eleven Apostles, purposely convened by him on the occasion, (as we read, MATT. xxviii. 16;) the conclusion may be drawn, that it was the design of the Divine Founder of the church, that the sacred office of ministering in it should be subject to that control and direction, which was best calculated to give effect to his Divine institution. Upon this idea have the governors of the church uniformly proceeded, in the discharge of that commission, from the days of the Apostles down to the present time.

Thus stands the fact; a fact not to be controverted; and reason teaches us, that the wisdom of God has been manifested upon this occasion.

The church, as it has already been observed, is a society; and every society is distinguished from the general mass of the community by its order and government. To the establishment of order and government, a regular appointment of chosen men to the administration of particular offices is essential.

But if any man, independent of all regular appointment, is to take upon himself the discharge of an office, for which he may feel himself disposed, or think himself qualified; the society having no longer any security for the proper management of its concerns, the end for which it has been collected being thereby frustrated, its consequent dissolution must ensue.

This mode of reasoning, so far as temporal affairs are concerned, we readily admit. Let it be applied, as it ought to be, to the case of the church, considered as a society, formed by God under a particular government calculated to promote the end of its institution; and we shall conclude in one case, as in the other, that personal qualifications furnish no dispensation for an outward appointment to an office of trust; because this is the only security which the members of the church can have against imposture; it being the only criterion by which they can judge, who are the ministers of the church, and who are not.

We do not say that the personal qualification of the minister in spiritual matters, is not requisite to the proper discharge of his sacred office; because it confessedly is so to a certain degree, and on that account truly desirable: but what we would be un-

derstood to say is, that in the administration of an outward sacrament, which is to be considered as the appointed means of spiritual communication from God to man; nothing is to be regarded as *absolutely necessary*, but the *lawfulness of the commission* by which it is administered. For it is the *commission* which secures to us the Divine confirmation of the ministerial act, and not the personal qualification of the minister; that the eye of the faithful may be directed to the proper object, and God, not man, receive the glory.

JUDAS received a commission from our SAVIOUR to baptize, no less than the other Apostles. And there can be no doubt, but that the baptism administered by him was equally effectual with that administered by any other Apostle. Yet we read that this JUDAS was a devil. JOHN vi. From whence it is to be observed, that the power of Divine grace, happily for mankind, is not limited by the poorness of the instrument appointed to convey it; and that a ministerial act performed by proper authority, may be valid to the parties to whom it is applied, be the performer of it ever so unworthy.*

* “*Sacramentum non ex ejus manu estimandum esse a quo administratur, sed velut ex ipsa DEI manu, a quo haud dubie profectum*

“For this cause,” says ST. BARNABAS, in his Catholic epistle, c. 5, “did CHRIST choose men who were exceeding sinners, to be his apostles; to shew the greatness of his power and grace; and put the inestimable treasure of his Gospel into earthen vessels, that the praise might be to GOD, and not to men.”†

The idea of the personal sanctity of the minister being necessary to the effectual administration of his office, constituted one of the earliest errors in the Christian church; and has accompanied it through every stage of its progress. The effect of it, wherever it has prevailed, has been uniformly destructive of peace and unity; by fixing the eye of the Christian worshipper upon the *man*, rather than upon the *office*; by which means the persons of ministers being held in admiration, the commission by which they have been authorised to act in the ministry has become an object of inferior consideration.

But it should be remembered, that there is an holiness of *office*, independent of the holiness of the

est: inde colligere licet nihil illi afferri vel auferri ejus dignitate per cujus manum traditur.”—CALV. Instit. lib. iv. c. 15.

† Such, we should remind the reader, is the principle laid down by our Church in her 26th Article.

minister; the former, being essential to the validity of the ministerial act, is on that account not to be dispensed with, whilst the latter only recommends and adorns it.

That these two qualifications should always meet together, is doubtless a circumstance most devoutly to be wished; but as, through the infirmity of human nature, this will not always be the case, it ought to become an object of primary concern with us in our judgment upon this point, that the *greater* consideration be at no time sacrificed to the *lesser* one.

Where the inward call of the Spirit is therefore pleaded as a warrant for undertaking the sacred office, we have a right to expect that it should be accompanied with the *outward* call, or a regular appointment to that office; because reason tells us, that the end for which the church, as a society, was instituted, requires that thus it should be; because, moreover, where there could be no possibility of deception in the party, as in the case of our blessed SAVIOUR, (a circumstance which challenges particular consideration) this conformity to order was judged necessary to be observed. And if our blessed SAVIOUR condescended to regulate his public exercise of a sacred office by this rule of order, with the

view, doubtless, that it should become obligatory upon every succeeding minister in his church; we need not hesitate to call it something worse than presumption in man, upon the ground of any qualification whatever, to plead an exemption from it.

What zeal soever, therefore, a man may feel, and what qualification soever he may possess for the service of God; still God, to be served acceptably, must be served in his own way. Well-meaning people (and I wish to speak of them with respect, for we may honour their principle at the same time that we condemn their practice) should consider, that good intention and regular practice are two very different things; and that the former can never make amends for the disorder occasioned by the defect of the latter. On this account it is, that the intention of the agent is never admitted as a sanction for the irregularity of his act. UZZAH, it is probable, meant well, when "he put forth his hand to hold the ark." But UZZAH was struck dead on the spot, for invading the office of the priesthood. I Chron. xiii. 9. SAUL, it is presumed, meant well, when, in the absence of SAMUEL, he offered the burnt-offering. But the sentence pronounced against him was, that in so doing "he had done foolishly; that he had not kept the com-

mandments of the LORD his GOD, and that therefore his kingdom should not continue." I Sam. xiii. 8. There is not a more common deception than that which arises from the persuasion that the act is justified by the *sincerity* of the agent. *Sincerity*, it is to be observed, generally speaking, signifies nothing more than that a person is earnest in the pursuit of his object; that he really believes as he professes, and acts as his best judgment directs. But this sincerity may consist with the most irregular practice, and the most unchristian disposition. A man, for instance, may believe his own lie; and act upon it with the same confidence that another acts upon the truth: he may have a zeal for GOD's service, but not according to knowledge; he may earnestly pursue a wrong object, or a right one, by irregular means. In all such cases the scripture has furnished us with a general rule of judgment, where it tells us, that "a man is not crowned, except he strive *lawfully*." And, "that there is a way which *seemeth right* unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." "There are excellent works," says Bishop REYNOLDS, "which being done without the call of GOD, do not edify but disturb the body. The way for the church to prosper and flourish is, for

every member to keep in his own rank and order; to remember his *own measure*; to act in his own sphere, to manage his particular condition and relations with spiritual wisdom and humility; the eye to do the work of an eye, the hand of an hand."

In short, whatever ideas of serving God we may form to ourselves, God is not to be served by a breach of his commands. And this we may depend upon, that God will be best served, when the attention of every person in his own order, shall be confined to the discharge of the duties appropriate to his particular station.

every member to keep in his own track, and every
to remember his own way, for in this is the way
to the future, to the future of the nation, and the
future of the world, and the future of the human
race, and the future of the whole of our life.
It is the duty of every man to keep in his own track,
and to remember his own way, for in this is the way
to the future, to the future of the nation, and the
future of the world, and the future of the human
race, and the future of the whole of our life.

DISCOURSE V.

On the Plea advanced by SEPARATISTS from the CHURCH, that the GOSPEL is not preached in it.

A FURTHER plea commonly advanced by Separatists is, that the Gospel is not preached in our Church. Had it been said, that the *Gospel* of J. CALVIN was not preached there, we should readily have pleaded guilty to the charge; but that the *Gospel* of JESUS CHRIST is preached there, we certainly maintain, upon the authority of those Scriptures from which it has been received.

The leading doctrine of CHRIST'S Gospel, in the judgment of some Christians, is, that it holds out salvation to *certain chosen individuals*, exclusive of the general bulk of mankind. The doctrine of our church upon the subject is, that CHRIST died to purchase salvation for *all* men; all men, consequently, are interested in that great event, though all men will not be in a condition to be benefited by it. The notion of *partial* salvation is founded upon certain

supposed absolute decrees; of which some preachers talk much, but confessedly know nothing. The doctrine of *general* salvation, by which we mean salvation attainable by *all men upon certain conditions*, is founded upon the general scope and tenour of the holy writings, supported by particular passages direct to this purpose.

ST. JOHN, speaking of JESUS CHRIST the righteous, styles him “the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world*.” 1 John ii. 2. It was the observation of ST. PETER, upon his eyes being opened to the general design of the Gospel dispensation, “That GOD is no *respecter of persons*: but in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.” Acts x. 34. But the doctrine of J. CALVIN makes GOD the greatest respecter of persons; and that in a matter of the most essential importance.

In another part of the sacred writings, we are told by GOD himself, that “He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he should return from his evil way, and live.” Ezek. xviii. 32.

But according to J. CALVIN, GOD has determined, by an *absolute decree*, an event, which at the same time, in conformity with the foregoing declara-

tion, He does not wish should take place. The absurdity of such a supposition, which makes the God of truth contradict himself, need not be pointed out.

Once again; our SAVIOUR, to the question put to him, "LORD, are there few that be saved?" returned the following answer: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."* On this head common sense teaches us to reason thus. Upon the supposition that there was an arbitrary decree of God, ascertaining the number, and determining individually the persons, who shall be saved; this direction of our SAVIOUR was both vain and useless; because no striving of man could, in this case, produce any alteration in his condition. To direct a man to strive, when, in consequence of his fate being determined by an over-ruling power, striving could answer no purpose, would be something like locking a man up in prison, and calling upon him to come forth, while you kept the key of the prison-door in your pocket.

But if we read the whole of our SAVIOUR's answer on this occasion, we shall be convinced that the inability of the parties to enter in at the strait gate,

* Luke xiii. 24.

did not arise from any decree of God against them, but from defect in themselves. They had refused to enter in till the gate was shut; or sought to enter in, without having gained the victory over their spiritual enemies.* No grace of God was wanting in this case, but *holiness* in man. The parties excluded might have entered in, had they been qualified for admission; but they were, as we read v. 27, “workers of iniquity.”

To enter at large into the confutation of a doctrine which carries its own condemnation upon the face of it, would be a waste of time. Upon this idea we decline a particular consideration of those texts, which have been at different times so grossly misapplied to this subject; choosing rather to build what may be said upon it, on the general design of the Gospel revelation; from the consideration, that where that is

* The original word here made use of by the Evangelist, shews that it requires great constancy, diligence, and courage; a sharp conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, to succeed in entering through the strait gate into life eternal. The word signifies *to strive to agony*, with the utmost resolution, and with every faculty of body and mind. From whence we conclude, that something is left for man to do in this case. The gate of eternal life is opened to him by CHRIST, but the Christian must so strive as to become qualified for admission into it; otherwise, though he should “seek to enter, he shall not be able.”

once understood, the meaning of particular passages in it will be less liable to doubtful interpretation. And though this method does not give an answer to every cavil and objection, which enthusiasm and error have brought forward; yet it furnishes the considerate Christian with that standard of judgment, by which every doctrine belonging to the religious system may be so measured, as to enable him to build his conclusion upon it on the most rational foundation.

The grace of God to man in the Gospel revelation, teaches him to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” Whatever man, therefore, has received the Gospel in the truth and spirit of it, must manifest its effects in his life and conversation; from whence the following axiom is deducible, that no sound member of the church can be a bad member of society. A doctrine, then, which tends to weaken the obligation to repentance and newness of life; which supports the sinner with a false hope, or lulls him into a fatal security; which proves destructive of one great end of CHRIST’s death unto sin, namely, the reformation of the sinner; thereby counteracting one great object of the Gospel revelation;—cannot be a doctrine that cometh from God.

That the doctrine of *absolute decrees* produces this effect is certain, from the conclusion too generally drawn from it; the professors of it for the most part depending for salvation through CHRIST upon the strength of a positive and irrevocable decree in their favour, antecedent to their birth, and not dependent on their actions; the too general consequence of which has been, that instead of adorning the doctrine of GOD their Saviour in all things, which Christians are called upon to do, many have been led to disgrace it.

The remark of ERASMUS, the strenuous and unanswerable opposer of this doctrine, was this: “Of old (said he) the Gospel made men better; but the new-pretended gospel made them much worse.” And in another epistle upon the same subject he wrote still more strongly. “This new gospel (says he) founded upon the doctrine of *absolute decrees*, has produced a new generation of obstinate, impudent, hypocritical people, who are revilers, liars, deceivers; and who do not agree among themselves, and are very uneasy to others; who are seditious, furious, given to cavilling; and with whom I am so much dissatisfied, that if I knew any town where none of them were, I would go thither, and choose to live in it.”

This decisive judgment of ERASMUS upon the effects produced by the doctrine here alluded to, brings to my mind the answer made by an eminent preacher of it to some brethren who were enquiring into the success of his ministry. “I have made (replied he) many profelytes, and have a very full congregation; but (continued the preacher) all the effect I have found is, that I have preached a congregation of Christians into a congregation of devils.”

I would not be understood as adopting all the harsh expressions that have been at different times made use of upon this subject; because, at any rate, the application of them does not belong to the well-meaning among these mistaken people; but my object is to point out the general ill effect of the doctrine itself. And so long as it tends to cherish an idea, that salvation through CHRIST is a thing independent of the personal condition of the party; the foregoing language made use of by ERASMUS, and the preacher, is not, so far as those persons are concerned, in whose mind such an idea prevails, too strong for it. So long as it shall be maintained to be sound doctrine, that the true saints of God, as they are called, may commit horrible and crying sins, die without repentance, and yet be sure of salvation; we ministers are

called upon by our office to say, that such a doctrine is not of GOD; because it teareth up the very foundation of religion, induceth all manner of profaneness in the world, and is expressly contrary to the whole current of scripture.

One of the old independents of the last century said expressly, “ Let any true saint of GOD be taken away in the very act of any known sin, before it is possible for him to repent, I make no doubt or scruple of it, but he shall as surely be saved, as if he had lived to have repented of it;” and he instances in DAVID, in case he had been taken away, before he had repented of his adultery and murder. That some modern teachers of this doctrine are not behind hand with the old independent just mentioned, there is but too much reason to fear.

The remark made, therefore, upon this subject by an eminent bishop* of our church, is not so strictly confined to the wild schismatics of former days, as, for the credit of the present age, we could wish it was. “ The fanatical sects (said he) that sprang up in abundance, amid the confusions of the last century, had so corrupted the word of GOD by their impure glosses on

* Bishop HURD. Sermons at Lincoln's-Inn.

the Gospel doctrine of grace, that the age became immoral on principle, and under the name of *saints*, engendered a hateful brood of profligate Antinomians, *i. e.* a sort of Christians, if they may be so called, who turned the grace of God into licentiousness; and to magnify his goodness, very conscientiously transgressed his laws. In a word, they taught that the elect were above ordinances, and might be saved without, nay in defiance of, the moral law."

Upon examining this doctrine closely, the deformity of which is so striking, that it is a matter of astonishment how it has ever gained credit in the world, we shall find it to be less built upon the word of scripture, than upon the vain conceit of man; which renders him a mere passive being in the work of salvation, and means of grace in a great measure useless institutions.

The first imagination that possesses the mind of an ignorant man upon the subject of the Divine decrees is, that in every thing relating to his salvation God must work in him both to will and to do, and therefore he must wait God's time. This idea, though true in its proper sense, is carried by him to that extreme, that if he be called upon to attend his church, and put himself under the word; he will tell

you, that means of grace can be of no use to him, till God shall be pleased to open his heart. Should he be reminded, that the Gospel condition upon which he must expect to receive is, that he should ask; and that having the use of his legs, he is as able to walk to church as to any other place: his answer is, that he does not feel the will to do it; and that God will make "his people willing in the day of his power." Pf. cx. 3. In this confidence he lives an heathenish life, without God in the world, waiting for that compulsive act of Divine power, by which he is to be brought into a state of salvation.

Feeling at some future period of his life, perhaps, some more than common impression made upon him by religious subjects, a second imagination takes possession of his mind. Considering this impression as the immediate operation of that Divine power, which he has been waiting to experience, he now persuades himself that he is in the number of God's *elect people*, and that consequently his salvation is secure. Upon his being reminded, that he that "thinketh he standeth, must take heed lest he fall," his answer is, he cannot fall; for God will keep his elect from falling; He who has begun the work in them, will

complete it; so that the man who is once in a state of salvation, must be always in it. When the case of DAVID, the man of GOD's own heart, is stated to him; or the text quoted, where that chosen vessel ST. PAUL expresses an apprehension, lest "after all his preaching to others, he himself should be a cast-away," he has a reply suited to the occasion; that upon the supposition that the elect may commit grievous sins, his comfort is, that their salvation cannot be endangered, because no act of man can render void the Divine purpose in his favour.

Thus then, under the impression of the first of these imaginations, the man neglects the use of the means of grace, upon the idea that his heart has not been opened by GOD to receive benefit from them; and because he has no power of himself to help himself, he cannot be persuaded to make use of that power which GOD has given him. Under the impression of the second, the means of grace are oft times considered by him to be of no consequence, from the conviction that his salvation is effectually secured.

I do not say that this doctrine is carried to the same extent by every professor of it. GOD forbid it should. For there are degrees of folly, as there are degrees of wisdom; and no extraordinary case can

constitute a proper standard for general application. But there is one instance to be produced, which authorises my placing it in the light in which it is here placed, with the view of guarding my reader against it. One of my parishioners, who took his divinity, as many others perhaps may do, from some old puritanical writers of the last century, rather than from the Bible, maintained, I am sorry to think, the above doctrine in its fullest extent. He has been heard to say, that should he kill a man to-day, he should certainly go to heaven to-morrow. His salvation, therefore, being, according to his own notion, perfectly secured, religious ordinances, as means of grace, to him were useless. He acted, therefore, but in consistence with his doctrine, when, instead of frequenting a place of public worship on Sundays, he was generally occupied in attending his farm. But on this head we shall only say with SOUTH, that “what is nonsense upon a principle of reason, will never be sense upon a principle of religion.”

An additional anecdote, which furnishes a most striking proof of the ill effect of this dangerous doctrine in another way, shall be mentioned; because it has fallen within my own knowledge.

Upon collecting through my parish, some time since, for the relief of the emigrant French priests, I found an almost general disinclination among the dissenters from the church to contribute. At length one, more open than the rest, furnished the following reason for it; by telling me, that “CHRIST never died for those priests; and therefore he had no feeling for them, or concern about them.” Another, who had learnt his Christianity in the same school, upon my application to him on the same occasion, immediately exclaimed, “What, Sir, to a *Roman*? give to a Roman! one that lives in such errors: if I had ten thousand guineas, I would not bestow a single mite upon him!”

Read, now, the story of the good Samaritan; and judge how far such a narrow-minded religion, which engrosses all GOD’S favours to its own professors, and regards the rest of mankind as objects in a condition beneath that of the beasts that perish, agrees with the enlarged and charitable spirit of the Gospel. When the disciples of our SAVIOUR would have called down fire from Heaven to destroy their enemies, our SAVIOUR rebuked them, by telling them, that “they knew not what spirit they were of.” What would this SAVIOUR say to those pro-

fellors of his religion, who could suffer a fellow-creature to starve at their doors, because he lived in error?

In a word, let this doctrine of election and absolute decrees, as it is often understood, and the effects produced by it upon the lives of some of its professors, be compared with the revealed purpose of CHRIST's coming into the world, and the spirit of his religion; and let this be done fairly, without prejudice, and with an eye only to the truth, and it is impossible that any Christian can longer be led captive by such a delusion.

The rule laid down, though not strictly followed, by ST. AUGUSTINE, "that the more obscure parts of scripture should be interpreted by those that are plain," is the only rule that will enable us to form a rational and consistent judgment upon the doctrines of revelation.

That CHRIST came to redeem man in his general character from the consequences of the fall, and to purchase for him those means of renewed grace, which required only to be properly employed to become effectual to his salvation, constituted the essence of that glad tidings, which the birth of a SAVIOUR was intended to convey to a lost world.

This doctrine, so plainly and fully revealed, ought in reason to overbalance every argument drawn from a few obscure passages, which at first sight may seem to look a contrary way. But this is a consideration which seldom has its due weight with those who entertain some singular conceit or opinion. Engrossed with their own notions, they are not to be prevailed upon to make the general tenour of scripture the standard for their doctrine; but are apt to bend and warp the expressions of it to their own particular purpose: and whilst they eagerly lay hold of every passage that seems to countenance it, will hardly give a hearing to other texts, how plain soever, that might serve to set the subject in its true light. To this prejudice in favour of a pre-conceived opinion, added perhaps to a certain respect for the authority of names, is that doctrine in a great degree to be attributed, which places the conduct of a merciful CREATOR towards his fellow-creature in a light so very different from that in which the plainest texts of scripture authorise us to regard it.

In fact, those parts of ST. PAUL's writings on which this partial doctrine is supposed to be founded, which has perplexed the minds of so many well-meaning people, were seen in a very different light

by the primitive Christians; to whom they conveyed the same idea that they now convey to all who pay attention to the general tenour of the Apostle's argument. By them the Apostle has been considered as laying open the mysterious plan of Providence at that time taking place in the world, which respected the rejection of the Jews from their boasted peculiarity as a nation, and the election of the Gentiles to a common participation with them in the privileges of the Christian church; "that through CHRIST both Jew and Gentile, being reconciled unto GOD in one body by the cross, might have an access by one spirit unto the Father." Ephes. ii. 18.

A want of attention to this leading circumstance, relative to the Jewish nation being the chosen people of GOD, distinguished by particular laws and privileges from all other nations, has given rise to numberless errors, which have disturbed the peace of the Christian church, from the days of the Apostles to the present time. But in no instance has this want of discrimination led to more unchristian conclusions, than in the case now before us; in which the general declarations of Divine favour and vengeance, expressed by the election and rejection of *nations*, as such, have, through a mistaken interpret-

ation, become the subjects of *particular* and *personal* application.

For my own part, I do not take my faith from the writings of LUTHER, CALVIN, or the more ancient professor of this doctrine, ST. AUGUSTINE; at the same time that I profess the highest respect for each of them; but from that fountain from whence alone it ought to be taken, *the word of God*. If some zealous men, from a laudable opposition to one dangerous doctrine, have been heated into a determined support of another; I lament in them the infirmity of the human understanding, which is too apt, in avoiding one extreme, to be carried into its opposite. The unbalanced mind of man rarely sustains itself in that due mean which reason and religion mark out. This has been the case in the subject under consideration.

With the view of cutting up by the root the *doctrine of merit*, which had constituted one of the grossest corruptions of the church of Rome, some of the first foreign reformers brought forward that of *absolute unconditional election, and irresistible grace*.

This was, indeed, to do the business at a stroke; but it was a stroke which severely wounded the cause it was meant to serve. By taking away man's

free agency, an end was at once put to the morality and immorality of human actions; for a being, whose conduct is determined by an over-ruling power, cannot be an accountable one. Thus a corrupt doctrine made way for a species of *fatalism*, which, under an imposing title, tends to deprive rational Christianity of its firmest support.

But, thank GOD, the bible is before me. The word *election* is in it, it is true; but as I would not be governed by the sound of a word, but by its relative signification, I examine the passages where it is to be met with; and am thereby satisfied, that it does not mean the *personal election* of individuals to eternal life, but the *election of nations* to the blessings and privileges of the Gospel dispensation. Where it is said, "JACOB have I loved, and ESAU have I hated;" it only means, (as I trust it is generally understood) that GOD preferred JACOB to ESAU, to inherit and convey the blessing which had been pronounced to faithful ABRAHAM. And nothing but a vain desire to force texts of scripture into the support of an ill-founded scheme of a *particular election and reprobation* to eternal life and eternal misery, could induce any one to press the instance of JACOB and ESAU into their service.*

* See Note at the end of this Discourse.

With respect to *absolute decrees*, determining the future salvation of individuals, I see nothing in scripture that leads me to conclude that there are any such; on the contrary, I see all through the bible *general* promises of mercy suspended upon *particular conditions*.

On the supposition, then, that any decrees may have been established in the Divine councils, (a subject on which I presume not to pronounce) my comfort is, that they must be conformable to God's revealed will; because a God of truth cannot contradict himself. Without perplexing myself, therefore, with an useless enquiry with respect to what God may do by an absolute act of power, I consider what He hath done, and what stands with his wisdom, justice, and goodness to do. And seeing myself called upon by his Apostle to make my calling and election sure, I conclude, as I conceive every reasonable man must do, that there can be no absolute decree in a case, the certainty of which depends in some measure upon myself. Confining myself, consequently, to the revealed will of God, which was given for my instruction in righteousness, and by which I am to be judged; my sole endeavour is, by Divine grace, to conform myself to it; being well assured, from the

general tenour of scripture, that no *sanctified* person will be shut out of heaven, and no *unsanctified* one admitted into it: “for without holiness no man shall see the LORD.”

And happy is that meekness and poverty of spirit, which industriously declines the rugged thorny paths of controversy and captious dispute, and walks in the plain smooth way of duty and practical religion; which studies GOD’s commands, and labours to understand things of a size with its capacity. Too many instances there are of daring men, who, by presuming to sound the deep things of religion, have cavilled and argued themselves out of all religion. These men mistake their business. For what CHRIST requires of those who profess his religion is, not penetration or subtlety of wit; nice distinctions, or sublime notions; but victorious faith, and an honest holy life; sobriety, temperance, and chastity; justice and charity, piety and devotion. Let the Christian submit his reason to revelation, and let humility and deference to GOD recommend his faith; and then, though there may be knowledge too wonderful for him, and so high that he cannot attain unto it, yet he will be sure not to want any that is necessary or profitable for him.

✠ “JACOB have I loved, but ESAU have I hated.” Rom. ix. 13. The Apostle quotes the foregoing text from the prophet MALACHI, cap. i. 2, 3. By attending to the context it will plainly appear, that what has been hastily concluded from it, respecting the personal election of one party, and the personal reprobation of the other, was not the idea meant to be conveyed by the prophet. “I loved JACOB,” saith the LORD, “and I hated ESAU.” The account of the manner in which this divine love and hatred were manifested is immediately subjoined. “I loved JACOB, and I hated ESAU; and laid his mountains and his heritage waste, for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas EDOM saith, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places. Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; they shall build, but I will pull down; and they shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, the LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.” The latter words in the foregoing passage refer to the circumstance of the MESSIAH being to come from JACOB, and not from ESAU. In which respect JACOB is said to be loved, and ESAU to be hated; that is, the line of JACOB was preferred by GOD to that of ESAU for the conveyance of the blessing promised to ABRAHAM. The promise to ABRAHAM was, that “in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.” But it was no part of this promise, that the blessing should be conveyed through the elder branch of his family; and it could pass only through one branch of it; it remained, therefore, with GOD to choose which branch he thought proper. According to his will, then, the blessing of the promised seed passed through ISAAC, not through

ISHMAEL; through JACOB, and not through ESAU; through JUDAH, not through either of the other sons of JACOB; and through DAVID, in preference to his elder brethren.

With a view to the preference given upon this occasion, ISAAC, JACOB, JUDAH, and DAVID may be said, in the strong language of scripture, to have been *loved of God*; that is, preferred by Him; whilst ISHMAEL, ESAU, and the brethren of JUDAH and DAVID, were *bated or rejected*. In the same sense the Virgin MARY may be said to have *been loved by God*, and all other women in the world hated; because she was chosen or preferred, before all other women, to be the mother of the promised MESSIAH.

The expressions, therefore, of *loving* and *bating*, as applied to JACOB and ESAU, are to be taken in the sense in which our SAVIOUR used the latter, when he said, that “if any man came to him, and *bated* not his father and mother, &c. he could not be his disciple.” LUKE xiv. 26. That is, he that preferred his father and mother, &c. before him, and was not willing to sacrifice every worldly consideration, rather than renounce him, was not worthy to be his disciple.

And that this text, quoted from the Prophet, referred not to the personal condition of the parties mentioned in it, but to that of their respective posterities, the argument of the Apostle furnishes a proof. “For the children,” ESAU and JACOB, says he, “being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said, the elder shall serve the younger.” Rom. ix. 11. But ESAU the elder, as appears from the history, never did serve JACOB. *Personally*, JACOB seems ever to have been the inferior. The word of the LORD, therefore, in this remarkable passage, not being verified in the persons of ESAU and JACOB, the accomplishment of it must be referred to their posterity; and upon this head no doubt can be entertained

by any one who reads the whole passage as it stands, Gen. xxv, 23: "And the LORD said unto REBEKAH," as she was upon the point of being delivered of the two sons in question, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."

This circumstance of the *elder serving the younger* not having then taken place in the persons of ESAU and JACOB, we must look for some spiritual sense, in order to perceive the completion of this blessing to JACOB; and this will lead us to that person promised to ABRAHAM and to ISAAC, as the blessing of all nations, even JESUS CHRIST.

The original promise to ABRAHAM implied, that all nations of the earth should have an equal right in the blessing of the MESSIAH; yet the church of GOD, of which the MESSIAH is head and king, was for a time confined to the descendants of JACOB. In this state of the church, did the posterity of ESAU serve, or was inferior to, that of JACOB. At length the distinction was taken away. The church of GOD was opened to all nations, and Gentiles as well as Jews became the people of GOD. Then did ESAU the Gentile break the yoke of JACOB the Jew from off his neck, and became his equal.

An attention to the Apostle's argument will convince the reader, that it was St. PAUL's object on the occasion, not to support the doctrine of predestination, or the personal election of individuals to the Divine favour; but to reconcile the Jews, to whom it was addressed, to the Divine dispensation in the promulgation of the Gospel.

The Gospel was to be first preached to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and upon their rejection of it, to the Gentiles. "It was necessary" (said the Apostles to the Jews) "that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy

of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles: for so hath the LORD commanded us." Acts xiii. 46, 47.

The Jews, the peculiar people of God, were at this time to lose that distinction. The middle wall of partition, which heretofore separated the Jewish from the Gentile worshipper in the temple, is therefore said, by the Apostle, to have been broken down by CHRIST; that both Jew and Gentile might thereby understand, that they were now to be admitted into the church upon the same footing; the object of JESUS CHRIST's coming into the world being, "that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross." Ephes. ii. 16. In allusion to this part of the Divine dispensation respecting the admission of the Gentiles into the church, the Apostle refers to the prophet HOSEA, where he says in the name of the LORD, "I will call them my people, which were not my people, and her *beloved*, which was not *beloved*. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called, The children of the living God." Rom. ix. 25, 26.

This circumstance respecting the admission of the Gentiles into the Christian church proved a great stumbling-block in the way of the Jews, at the first preaching the Gospel. To reconcile them to it, the Apostle tells them, they might as well ask, why God at first chose the Jews to be his elect and peculiar people; to which no reason was to be given, but that it was his will so to do. "I will have mercy (says God) on whom I will have mercy." In like manner they might ask, why God chose that the MESSIAH should descend from the line of JACOB, in preference to that of ESAU; to which a similar answer was to be given; It was God's will that so it should be. In this case, of preferring one nation before another, the Creator of man hath exercised the same power which the potter exercises over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour; and the

thing formed is not to say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

Taken in this sense then, not as referring to the *personal* election of individuals to Divine favour in exclusion of others, but to the election of *nations* to particular and temporary privileges, for the purpose of carrying into effect the great mystery of godliness for the *more general benefit* of mankind, the argument here made use of by the Apostle is plain, regular, and consistent: and to press an argument beyond the subject to which it was originally applied, is to take the way most likely to lead into error.

[The Reader will see this subject more largely, and, I flatter myself, more conclusively treated, in the Fourth Letter of the Appendix.]

DISCOURSE VI.

*On the SACRAMENT of BAPTISM, considered as
furnishing a Plea for Separation from the
Church.*

TO the two pleas already advanced, a third is to be added, respecting the SACRAMENT of BAPTISM; which, as it is administered in the church, is by some maintained to be invalid, for the following reasons: First, because children are incapable of being subjects of it; and secondly, because, after the example of our SAVIOUR, who was baptized in Jordan, it ought to be administered by the immersion of grown persons in a river. Did this plea stand upon firm ground, it ought, as relating to an essential service of the church, to have weight; but standing as it does, according to our ideas, on no foundation, it can, in our judgment, have no weight at all. But as this constitutes one of the master-prejudices against the church, it may be proper to give it some consideration.

The ground upon which the first part of this plea stands, respects the incapacity of children to fulfil the conditions of the baptismal covenant.

But this argument, if it prove any thing in the case, proves too much. For if no persons are to be baptized who are incapable of fulfilling the conditions of baptism, our SAVIOUR himself was, of all others, the most incapable of baptism.

The baptism of JOHN was a *baptism unto repentance*. “He came (we read) preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” But our blessed SAVIOUR had no sins to repent of. He was “the Lamb of GOD *without spot*.” On this account we find JOHN refusing to baptize our SAVIOUR, considering him an improper subject for the ordinance. “I have need to be baptized of thee, (says the baptist) and comest thou to me;” But our SAVIOUR, by his answer, convinced him, that though he had no sins to repent of, yet *some other end* was to be answered by his being baptized. “Suffer it to be so now, (says CHRIST) for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Matt. iii. 15.

In like manner infants, though incapable of some of the ends of baptism, are not incapable of all. They cannot, it is true, make profession either of

their faith or repentance; because they cannot understand what is meant by the one, nor are they in want of the other; having no actual sins to repent of. But, as infants, they are capable of receiving a sign of God's grace and favour. They are capable, for instance, of being admitted into the communion of the Christian church, and of having the privileges of the Gospel covenant consigned to them; although they are too young to understand the nature of that covenant, or perform the duties enjoined upon its members. In a word, they are capable of being washed from their original corruption, and of receiving the sign of their restoration to God's grace; though they may not at the time be capable of understanding the condition upon which it is suspended.

And if God has been pleased to regard the offspring of believing parents as holy from their birth, (as the Apostle hath plainly told us, 1 Cor. vii. 12) and thereby given them a present interest in, and sort of hereditary right to, those means which CHRIST appointed for the sanctification of his church; ought we not rather to rejoice, that God's covenant of mercy to man is bestowed with a latitude extending to persons of all ages, than seek to set limits to Divine goodness, by restraining it within the narrow

bounds of our own uncharitable prejudices? If CHRIST was pleased to leave the door of his church, which was open to children under the Jewish dispensation, still open to them under the Christian; as he gave his disciples to understand, by telling them to “suffer little children to come to him, for of such was the kingdom of GOD;” (or, as the meaning may be better expressed, for *theirs is the kingdom of GOD*, or the kingdom of GOD *belongs to them*;) it seems an unaccountable infatuation, that parents, who in all other cases fail not to manifest a zeal for the maintenance of their children’s privileges, should in this be so ready to give them up.

I would ask such parents a question—Do they think that their children, dying unbaptized, are capable of admission into the kingdom of heaven? Relying on the mercy of GOD, (though *uncovenanted* mercy is all upon which they can, in this instance, place any just dependence) they will doubtless answer, *Yes*.

But persons who are capable of the *greater*, are certainly capable of the *less*, which is contained within it. If through Divine mercy, then, unbaptized children are capable of admission into the kingdom of GOD in heaven, they are surely capable, through the same mercy, of admission into the

church, which is the *kingdom of God on earth*. If they are capable of receiving the fulness of Divine mercy in the possession of everlasting blessedness in heaven; where CHRIST has told us, "their angels continually behold his Father's face," (Matth. xviii.) they are surely capable of being admitted into that church membership, which was designed only as preparatory to it.

Although infants, therefore, should not suffer for the negligence, obstinacy, or self-opinion, of their parents; yet parents would do well to consider what may be the consequence to themselves, for shewing less attention to the spiritual condition of their children, than GOD has done; by straitening that covenant, which, in the original delivery of it, was expressly extended to them; and, in the Jewish church, scrupulously continued to them. At the same time they may remember, that though the child of Moses suffered no punishment for the delay of his circumcision, yet the father (as we read Exodus iv. 24) very narrowly escaped it on a memorable occasion.

But it may be observed further, in answer to those who object to the admission of infants to baptism on account of *incapacity*, that the Jewish infants were admitted into the covenant by circumcision at eight

days old, by GOD's exprefs command. That there is the fame reason for infants of Christian parents to be admitted to baptifm, is to be thus proved.

The covenant entered into by GOD with ABRAHAM (an account of which we have in the feventeenth chapter of Genesis) was, as ST. PAUL plainly tells us in the third chapter of Galatians, the *Gospel covenant*. “The fcripture, (fays the Apoftle) forefeeing that GOD would juftify the heathen through faith, preached before the *Gospel to Abraham*,” delivered beforehand the glad-tidings of that event to ABRAHAM in the following words: “In thee fhall all the nations of the earth be bleffed.” “Now to ABRAHAM and his feed were the promifes made. He faith not, And to feeds, as of many; but as of one: And to thy feed, which is CHRIST. This I fay, that the covenant that was confirmed before of GOD in CHRIST; the law which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot difannul, that it fhould (make the promife of none effect.” “From thefe words, which diftinguifh fo plainly between the covenant which GOD made with ABRAHAM, or the promife which he made unto him, and the law; it is evident, that the beginning of the Jewish church, purely confidered as a church, is to be dated from

the covenant which GOD made with ABRAHAM; and therefore, in the second place, the way to find out the nature of the Abrahamicall or pure Jewish church, is to consider the nature of the covenant or promise upon which it was founded; and if we examine the scriptures, we shall find, that it was an *Evangelical* covenant, for substance the same with that which is since made betwixt GOD and us, thro' CHRIST. This will appear upon a review of those scriptures which teach us, That *faith* was the condition of this *Abrahamicall* covenant; that it was made with ABRAHAM,* as the father of the faithful, and in him with *all believers*, with his *spiritual* as well as carnal seed, proceeding from him by *spiritual* as well as carnal generation; and that the blessings or promises of this covenant belonged unto them upon the same account of their faith."||

* "Fide autem stare justitiam, et illic esse vitam predictum est apud HABAKKUC. *Justus autem ex fide vivet.* Inde ABRAHAM *Pater Gentium* credidit. In Genes. credidit ABRAHAM DEO, et deputatum est ei ad justitiam. Cognoscitis ergo qui *ex fide* sunt, hi sunt filii ABRAHÆ, providens scriptura quia *ex fide*, &c."

CYPRIAN advers. Judæos.

"Successisse verò in *eorum* locum Christianos *fide* Dominum promerentes, et de *omnibus gentibus*, ac *toto orbe venientes.*"

CYPRIAN ad Quirin. Testim. l. iii.

|| "Case of Infant Baptism by the Dean of Worcester." See London Cases, No. 15,

The covenant, then, that was made by GOD with ABRAHAM, was the *Gospel covenant*, containing the promise of blessing to all nations in CHRIST. Of admission into this covenant *circumcision* was, at that time, the appointed seal. *Circumcision*, therefore, was not a *legal institution*, but the *seal* of the *Gospel covenant*, administered to ABRAHAM four hundred and thirty years before the introduction of the law. Agreeably to which our SAVIOUR told the Jews, that “MOSES gave unto them circumcision, not because it was of MOSES, but of the fathers.”

All the alteration that took place in this business, upon our SAVIOUR's establishment of his church, was in the nature of the seal of the covenant; our SAVIOUR having exchanged the severe and painful one of *circumcision*, for the more mild and practicable one of *baptism*. The *seal*, then, is altered, but the *covenant* remains the *same*.

The covenant, therefore, into which Christians are admitted by baptism, being the same *Gospel covenant*, which was confirmed before to ABRAHAM in CHRIST; the mere change in the ritual can make no difference with respect to the capability of the parties to be admitted into it. Consequently the precept delivered to ABRAHAM, (Gen. x. 17) re-

specting the admission of infants into the Gospel covenant by *circumcision*, applies with equal force to the admission of infants into it by *baptism*; *circumcision* and *baptism* being seals or tokens of the same covenant, appointed by GOD to be made use of for the same purpose, at different periods. Hence it comes to pass, that the Church Christian is called in the New Testament, the *new and supernal Jerusalem*; to let us know that Christianity is nothing but *spiritual Judaism*; the same city new reformed, constituted upon a new charter, blessed with more noble and ample privileges than formerly, and every way better built, and more august than it was. Thus in Rev. iii. 12, “Unto him that overcometh (saith the Son of Man) I will write the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is *new Jerusalem*, which is come out of heaven from my God;” that is, I will acknowledge him that holds out to the end for a person truly godly, and for a true member of the pure Catholic-Christian church, which is the spiritual Jerusalem descended from above. And so, c. xxi. 2, “I saw the holy city (New Jerusalem) coming down from God, down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,” meaning JESUS CHRIST. So, in Gal. iv. “Jerusalem,

which is from above, is a *free* city, which is the mother of us all.”*

To what has been said, it need only be added, (for I avoid entering at large into a subject which has been so frequently and fully handled) that our SAVIOUR found the Jews in the practice of infant baptism; as has, I think, upon the ground of the strongest probability, been maintained by learned men. He, therefore, only transferred this ceremony from the Jewish church to his own, by making it the sacrament of initiation into it. It is to be concluded therefore, that the Apostles, who were Jews themselves, and who were directed to address the first offer of the Gospel to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel;” in baptizing them into the church of CHRIST, or rather into the new dispensation of it, would observe the general practice to which they had been accustomed, if they had received no express precept from CHRIST to direct them otherwise.

But the commission delivered to them by CHRIST was of a most general and comprehensive nature:—“Go ye, and baptize all nations.” In consequence of which commission, we read of their baptizing

* See “Case of Infant Baptism, by the Dean of Worcester,” London Cases.

whole houses, without any exception being made to any persons contained in them. If our SAVIOUR had not designed that baptism should be administered to infants, the commission to his Apostles would certainly have been accompanied with an express prohibition to that effect, to prevent their falling into so obvious a mistake. No such prohibition appearing, is a circumstance that, in reasonable construction, amounts to a confirmation of the practice then in use. For a rule that has once regularly obtained, if unrepealed, still remains in force. This is the argument made use of upon this subject by one of the most learned writers* of our church, and it appears to be unanswerable: “If baptism and the baptizing of infants had been a new thing, and unheard of until JOHN Baptist came, as circumcision was, until GOD appointed it to ABRAHAM; there would have been, no doubt, an express command for baptizing infants, as there was for circumcising them.” But, “since it was ordinary in all ages to have infants baptized, if CHRIST would have had that custom abolished, he would have expressly forbidden it. So that his and the scriptures’ silence in this matter does confirm and establish infant baptism for ever.”

To the second part of the plea respecting the baptism of CHRIST in the river Jordan, considered as establishing a precedent for the practice of a similar form of admission into the Christian church, we have the following answer to make; though the subject itself is almost too ridiculous to be entitled to serious discussion.

Our SAVIOUR, we read, was baptized by JOHN in the river Jordan. But the conclusion drawn from thence, respecting the form of administering *Christian baptism*, does not appear by any means warranted by the premises.

The baptism of JOHN was a peculiar ministration, preparatory to the establishment of CHRIST's church; but did not actually admit into it, or convey the privileges of it. For which reason, we find ST. PAUL baptizing some disciples of JOHN, whom he found at Ephesus, *a second time*, in the name of the LORD JESUS: Acts xix. The baptism of JOHN, then, and the baptism appointed by JESUS CHRIST, being two different ordinances, in use at different times, and for different purposes; it does not appear that the one, as to the exact form of its administration, should necessarily constitute a precedent for the other.

The disciples of CHRIST and JOHN lived under a different œconomy, and were subjected to different rules; a circumstance which occasionally gave offence to those who understood not the nature of our SAVIOUR's mission. In this temper of mind, the disciples of JOHN came to JESUS to know the reason, "why the disciples of JOHN and of the Pharisees fasted oft, whilst his disciples fasted not." But what was a rule in the one case, did not become obligatory in the other; the parties to whom it was applied being differently circumstanced.

CHRIST, it must be considered then, baptized men to be his own disciples, not to be the disciples of JOHN: and his baptism was the baptism of admission into the Christian church; whilst that of JOHN was only a baptism of discipleship into his own peculiar ministry. Allowing, therefore, that all JOHN's disciples were baptized in a river, (which is more than can be proved, and from the nature of JOHN's ministry, as the preacher of the wilderness, it is probable that he made use of water in any place where it was convenient for his purpose;) it does not follow from this circumstance, that the disciples of CHRIST should be baptized in a river also; CHRIST having no where ordained that they should be: and reason

forbids us to conclude, that the quantity of water made use of in this sacrament, any more than the quantity of bread and wine consumed in that of the LORD's Supper, can be essential to the validity of the institution.

When PETER, ignorant of the spiritual nature of CHRIST's washing, required him not only to wash his feet, but also his hands and his head, judging that a partial washing could not effect a general cleansing, our SAVIOUR's answer was calculated to rebuke his carnal application of the act, by telling him, that "he that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." JOHN xiii. 10. PETER therefore was given to understand, that the effect produced in this case, was not by the outward application of the element of water, because parts were said to be cleansed which the water had not touched; but by the operation of the spirit on the soul, producing that inward purity, of which an idea was conveyed to the mind by this familiar application to the body. Thus, in like manner, the effect of washing in baptism is not produced by the water applied to the body, either in whole or in part; but by the spirit of GOD accompanying an ordinance of his own institution, and producing that effect upon

the soul of the party, of which the water is designed to be the type or emblem.

But it is to be further observed, that the circumstance now reckoned by some few individuals so *essential* to baptism, from the consideration of CHRIST'S having been baptized in a river, was, in the primitive church, either not regarded at all, or at least deemed a matter of indifference. For though the form of plunging the whole body was in general observed, as most significant of the idea meant to be conveyed on the occasion; nevertheless this was done, not in a river, but in a *baptistry*, or building adjoining to their churches; where every thing was prepared for the decent administration of this service.

It is moreover well known not to have been an uncommon thing among the early Christians, to defer their baptism till they were supposed to be on their death-beds; upon the idea of guarding thereby against the probability of falling away from grace; in which cases, the form of plunging the party either in a river or elsewhere must, it is presumed, have been dispensed with. And in the case of the gaoler's family who were baptized in the prison, there is reason to think that the Apostle made use of still more discretionary latitude in the performance of this office;

from the consideration that there could be no river to be made use of on this occasion; together with the improbability that the gaoler's house should be provided with conveniences for the immersion of the whole body. For, according to the account given of this transaction, we find that it was a business of immediate dispatch; no time being given for preparation on the subject. Immediately upon the discovery of the situation of his prisoners, the gaoler (we read) "took them *the same hour of the night*, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, *straitway*." Acts xvi. 33.

And allowing, what might have been the case, that the gaoler's house was provided with a fountain, in which he and his family might have been baptized by immersion; yet this fountain not being a river, a deviation from the supposed established practice of baptism in one point, as circumstances then required, renders the imitation of our SAVIOUR's example, as to the letter, not *essential* to this service.

From these premises, we feel ourselves warranted in concluding, that the baptism of JOHN in the river Jordan constitutes no precedent for the baptism of Christians; and from the circumstance, that baptizing in a river, considered as the necessary form of admission

into the Christian church, has neither the authority of scripture, antiquity, or reason for its support, it consequently follows, that the example of CHRIST, in this case, was not meant to apply to his disciples.

But there is another and still more essential consideration belonging to this subject, which it is my duty to place before you.

Baptism is the seal of a covenant; a pledge, to assure the parties to whom it is applied, of the performance of those conditions, by which a gracious God has been pleased to bind himself to man. The affixing this seal God has made the peculiar office of his appointed ministers.

Now we know, that in all human covenants the size or shape of the seal, whether it be large or small, round or square, is a matter of no importance; the validity of it depending solely upon the character of the person who makes the impression. In a case where the affixing the seal is not the personal act of the contracting party, should the person who undertakes to do it, not be authorized to represent that party, the signature becomes ineffectual; and the covenant into which this self-appointed representative has presumed to enter, of course not binding. Apply this to the subject of baptism, and the conclusion, it is presumed, will

be, that it is not a matter of so much consequence, *where* baptism is administered, as by *whom*; and that the baptism in the church is valid, not on account of the particular form in which it is administered, but because those who administer it, have received a commission to bind the contracting party; and that the baptism out of the church, whether the service be performed in a river or elsewhere, is not so, for the opposite reason.

Much more might be said, and has been said upon this subject at different times; though, alas! with little effect; because men wedded to an opinion, however ill-founded, are seldom in a disposition to be convinced; the best arguments appearing weak and unsatisfactory, when opposed to inveterate prejudices.

Indeed, when I consider the liberal nature of the Gospel covenant, the general tenour of the Apostolic commission, and the universal practice of the primitive church consequent thereupon, I cannot tell where to find ground for a dispute upon this subject. But when I consider the nature of man, together with the many absurdities which have at different times found their strenuous advocates in the church; I am surpris'd at no conclusion that may be drawn by a being, who, as the world now goes, claims a right of

judging *absolutely* for himself in all religious matters: because zeal being a much more common thing than knowledge, it must often happen, even upon the most charitable construction, that sincerity and error will be so intimately blended together, that justly to discriminate between them will surpass the common powers of the human mind.*

* A learned and elaborate investigation of this general subject, the reader will find in "the History of Infant Baptism," by the Rev. W. Wall. For the manner in which this subject, as applicable to our present purpose has been handled in the foregoing Chapter, the reader will find abundant authority in "the Case of Infant Baptism" above referred to; written by that most learned divine and ornament of the Church of England, the Rev. G. HICKES, D.D.

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DISCOURSE VII.

On LIBERTY of CONSCIENCE.

TO the pleas already advanced in justification of separation from the church, may be added those general ones which respect the hacknied subjects of *liberty of conscience, toleration, and the right of private judgment* in religious matters; upon each of which it may be necessary to say a few words: because vulgar errors of some magnitude have been attached to these popular phrases, which have led many well-meaning people to dangerous conclusions. And the history of this country in particular proves, that it is a matter of importance to prevent people from running away with words; because there is a certain unaccountable magick in the sound of some words, which operates beyond what can be reasonably accounted for: the ill effect of which, upon minds unqualified to discriminate, it is always difficult, sometimes impossible, to counteract.

In fact, the generality of mankind are governed by *words* and *names*; often without, and sometimes even against their knowledge. Whilst the ignorant multitude are led backward and forward, this way and that way, like a drove of cattle, by the cry to which their drivers have familiarised them. This has been the case from the beginning of the world to the present day; and must be the case, so long as men continue to be what they are, more disposed to *act* than to *think*.

But words, it is to be observed, are but the garments of things; and sometimes loose garments, which are put off and on, according to the taste or humour of their employer. At the same time it should be remembered, that how often soever the dress may change, the body still remains the same: in other words, there is a character of truth essential to the nature of certain subjects, which, though by an artful disguise it may be made to serve the cause of imposture, will not remain unknown to those who have judgment and resolution to strip off the dress designed to conceal it.

Nothing would be more easy, than to prove the dreadful consequences derivable to society from such fatal deception, by an induction of those numberless circumstances in which a plausible word, wrested from

its proper sense, has proved the means of accomplishing whatever object the artful employer of it had in view, however destructive to the peace and welfare of mankind. But to avoid digression, it will be necessary to confine myself to what may be considered as falling within the compass of our present subject. The only popular phrases, therefore, upon which I shall now hazard a remark, will be those of *liberty of conscience, toleration*, and the *right of private judgment* in religious matters; subjects, upon which all separatists from the church are forward in enlarging; because they, for the most part, consider them as standing upon ground which is not to be shaken.

In subjects, where truth and error border so close upon each other, that it requires nice discrimination to trace out with precision the exact line of separation between them; and in which interest and prejudice have at all times had much to do, in misleading the understanding, and corrupting the judgment; we must not be surprised to find, not only a great variety of sentiments and opinions, but also a great perplexity in the manner in which they are delivered. When, through the infirmity of human nature, men are apt to be more intent on gaining the victory over an opponent, than on investigating the cause of truth;

they will choose that field of controversy, which gives the greatest scope for manœuvring, to prevent as much as may be, the possibility of their being pushed as it were into a corner, from whence there might be no escape. In defending their cause, therefore, knowing that much is to be said, which is not to be controverted; they take care to confine themselves to those generalities, to which their opponent cannot object; whilst their mode of attack consists, for the most part, in driving their adversary into extremes, by a studious aggravation of his conclusions, for the purpose of establishing a ground-work for popular declamation and abuse.

By this mode of managing controversy, the exact point in which truth lies, is continually kept out of sight; for men, whose object it is, in the handling certain subjects, not so much to convince, as to confound, will studiously steer clear of those precise limits, which ought to constitute the boundary for all rational argument on the occasion. To the subjects here immediately in view the foregoing observations may not be deemed wholly inapplicable.

Upon the first of them, it has been imagined, that, provided men follow the direction of their own *consciences*, they are justified in whatever mode of con-

duct they may adopt; which (as the term conscience is now too generally understood) is in other words to say, that because men are persuaded a thing is *right*, therefore it cannot be *wrong*. Upon this principle, it matters not what a man's profession is, provided he be *sincere* in it; consequently the *sincere* martyr for the faith, and the *sincere* persecutor of it, stand upon the same footing.

But though a conduct, in opposition to the dictate of conscience, carry with it its own condemnation, (for in such a case a man pronounces sentence upon himself;) it by no means follows, that a conduct in conformity to it will, on that account, secure to itself an acquittal. For this would be to make private opinion the standard of right and wrong, instead of the law of God; an idea which has, on different occasions, led to an infinity of mischief.

Though the plea of conscience, therefore, considered as the private judgment of the party upon the legality or illegality of his own conduct, might be a good one in the mouth of a heathen, who might have no surer guide to follow; yet it cannot be admitted in that of a Christian, but in proportion as it is conformable to the rule by which it will be judged. But, as preparatory to our forming a correct idea upon

this subject, it is necessary that we know what *conscience properly is*; for of the number that make use of the word, nineteen in twenty, perhaps, may be ignorant of its true meaning.

By *conscience*, then, is to be understood, not that knowledge, opinion, or persuasion, which a man may possess upon any given subject; but that knowledge, opinion, or persuasion, which is reflected inward upon his mind from some *reason, law, or rule, from without*, which is the proper standard of judgment in the case in question. Conscience, therefore, as its compound title denotes is, *comparative knowledge*; it is the judgment which a man passes on his own actions compared with some law. Remove all law, and you take away all conscience. For where there is no law, there can be no transgression; and where there is no transgression, there can be no judgment, because there is no criminal. Without a law superior to conscience, therefore, there can be no such thing as conscience at all: for conscience is a private, personal principle, which must necessarily be submitted to some law of **GOD**, real or supposed, as its ultimate rule.

“ When we speak of conscience in our actions, (says Archbishop SHARP) we have respect to some law or rule, by which those actions are to be directed and

governed, and by their agreeableness or disagreeableness with which, they become morally *good* or *evil*.* The law of the Christian, in religious matters, is the revealed will of GOD; and what, upon proper authority, is deducible from it. The *conscience* of a Christian, consequently, is that testimony which the mind bears to the conduct, when compared with that *revealed will*.

It is in fact the application of the general Christian law to a particular instance of practice. Hence it is, that conscience, as the vicegerent of GOD, carries a divine authority with it, because it has a divine word or precept to support it. But if no such word or precept is to be produced, it may, indeed, be strong opinion or persuasion, but it is not conscience. And no greater mischief has been done in the world, than from the want of a proper distinction having been made between conscience and mere confidence of opinion, or persuasion.

In temporal matters, should a man plead *conscience*, or it should rather be called *private persuasion*, against the determination of an existing law, he would be told, that he was not at liberty to make a rule for

* See "Discourse concerning Conscience" by Archbishop SHARP, in London Cases, No. 8.

himself different from that which the society, of which he was a member, had made for him; and upon which it was his duty to procure information. Were the case otherwise, the very end of society would be frustrated. For let it be considered, what must be the consequence of the admission of that principle, upon which the modern plea of conscience is too commonly founded; namely, that the private persuasion of the party, furnishes a justification for his public conduct.

The Quaker, for instance, considers the payment of tithe to be unlawful. He therefore resists the demand, upon the hacknied plea of conscience. But, as it has been already observed, nothing can be a rule of conscience, in religious matters, but some law of GOD, real or supposed. The plain law of GOD calls upon the Quaker, in common with all other members of a civilized community, to “submit himself to every ordinance of man for the LORD’s sake;” and the legislature of his country has made the payment of tithe legal. Nothing, then, can justify an opposition to the legislature, in this case, but a firm conviction in the mind of the party, that the law enacted is in direct contradiction to some law of GOD, natural or revealed.

But the law establishing the payment of tithe does not stand in this predicament; for it must be considered rather as a law in conformity with the revealed will of GOD, than in contradiction to it. The private persuasion of the Quaker, under the imposing plea of conscience, may therefore be considered as set up in opposition to the law both of GOD and man; and the admission of it by the legislature is but establishing a precedent for further opposition to its authority.

For let this principle be carried to its length, and it is easy to see where it must terminate. Upon the ground that the Quaker resists the law of tythe, he may take it into his head to resist any other act of the legislature; and if his resistance be admitted, if the private persuasion of the individual (for conscience it must not be called) be allowed to be pleaded in bar of obedience to an existing law, there will shortly be an end of all government in the world.

That this same plea of conscience is of equal validity, when made use of by Dissenters of any kind, as a justification for their non-conformity to the liturgy, rites, and ceremonies of our church, is a point that has been abundantly and repeatedly proved.*

* See SOUTH'S Sermons on 1 John iii. 21, vol. ii.; and "Discourse of Conscience" by Archbishop SHARP, in London Cases.

As in temporal matters, then, the law of the land becomes obligatory upon every individual of the community; so, in concerns of a spiritual nature, the will of GOD, so far as it has been revealed, admits of no exemption from its obligation; nor can conscience be pleaded as a justification for disobedience in either case.

If GOD, then, has been pleased to appoint a way in which he will be worshipped; I am no more at liberty, upon the mere ground of my own persuasion, to worship him in any other way, than I am at liberty to act in contradiction to his revealed will in any other matter. When men, therefore, talk of liberty of conscience, they would do well to consider, whether it be not, as the phrase is now generally understood, rather a liberty of their own making, than any portion of that liberty with which CHRIST has made them free.

Indeed, the idea that has for some time prevailed among us, that Christian liberty gives every man a right to worship GOD in his own way, appears to have been admitted without sufficient examination. There is not one single passage of scripture, which strikes me as warranting the conclusion that has been drawn upon this subject. Our SAVIOUR says,* “ he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath

* John xii. 48.

one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." And "though we, or an angel from heaven, (saith ST. PAUL) preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Gal. i. 8.

Suppose, now, any man, upon the plea of conscience, should reject CHRIST, as many, alas! have done; refuse to acknowledge him in his mediatorial character, and thereby set up for himself a religion, *essentially* different from that which has been revealed; will it be said, that CHRIST has given man a liberty to be thus employed against himself? "He that is not for me," saith CHRIST, "is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth."†

It has, indeed, been said, that in a matter which concerns his own salvation, every man should be left to the direction of his own judgment.

Provided the revealed will of GOD be made the rule of that judgment, this will be readily granted. But as this position is generally understood, those who are forward in advancing it, have not duly considered, perhaps, to what extent it may be carried; or, what is still more to the purpose, whether GOD has,

† Matt. xii. 30.

with respect to man's spiritual concerns, been pleased to leave him thus absolutely, as it were, in his own hands. If he has not, all reasoning upon the matter is at an end; and before men suffer themselves to be governed by a specious dogma, which is calculated to impose, they should examine, whether they have fairly measured their application of it by the standard set up for that purpose in the word of God. In other words, whether they have *honestly* made use of all means to inform their judgment, before they adopt it as their rule of conduct. If they have not, their sincerity, merely as such, will furnish no plea in their favour. They will be condemned, not because they are sincere, but because they have neglected those means of information, which would have directed their sincerity to its proper object. In consequence of which neglect, they may be in the condition of numberless assertors of the rights of conscience, that have appeared in all ages of the world; who, in the strenuous exertion of their zeal, thought they were doing God service, at the time they were engaged in the most direct opposition to his will; and sacrificing to idols which their own corrupt nature had set up, under the different shapes of *pride, prejudice, and worldly interest*.



DISCOURSE VIII.

On TOLERATION.

THE subject of TOLERATION has been open to much misconception.

The Act upon which it is founded, should be seen in a *civil*, not in a *religious* point of view; for it concerns men as members of a civil society, rather than in any other character. The passing this Act was a seasonable exertion of political wisdom, for the purpose of securing the government of this country, at a very critical period, upon the broadest foundation. And the Act itself may with more propriety be called an Act of Suspension, than of Toleration; the purpose of it being to secure Protestant Dissenters from the Church of England, on certain conditions, from the penalties to which they had been made subject by former statutes. That this was the idea which the legislators had before them at the time, may be fairly concluded, from the word *Toleration* not being once

mentioned through the whole statute; and from the Act of Uniformity being at the same time suffered to remain unrepealed.

To form a correct judgment, then, upon this subject, it may be proper to consider every law as composed of two distinct parts, the *preceptive*, that which binds the law upon the conscience, and the *coercive*, that which enforces the obligation of it upon the practice. Now the *coercive* part of any law, or the penal sanction annexed to it, is only for the necessary purpose of moving or constraining men to pay that obedience to the law, which is required of them. But the obligation upon the conscience is not derived from the penalty designed to secure it, but from the authority of the lawgiver; who, by virtue of that authority, had a right to exact obedience to all his just demands. A suspension, therefore, of the penal sanction, though in the present corrupt state of man it render the law less effectual, does not in anywise invalidate the law itself; which remains just what it was before the sanction was annexed to it; binding upon the party, or otherwise, according to the just tenour of the law in question, and the authority of the law-maker, independent of every other consideration. For it is not reasonable

to suppose, that the removal of the penalty can take away from the law that obligation which it derives from a different cause.

The Apostle seems to have had this idea before him in the following legal comment addressed to his disciples. "Wherefore," says he, "you must needs be subject, not only for *wrath*, but also for *conscience* sake:" not for fear of the penalty, but from a sense of the obligation which the law binds upon the conscience. A motive which ought to secure the obedience of every Christian.

The sanction annexed, then, to any law proves nothing as to the obligation of the law itself upon the conscience; but it proves, that in consequence of man not being in that perfect condition in which he ought to be, other motives, besides those derived from the reasonableness and equity of the command, are become necessary to secure his obedience. For every law stands upon the ground of its own merits; if good in itself, and enacted by proper authority, whether the penalties designed to secure its operation be enforced or not, its obligation upon the conscience remains the same.

Let us now consider what the Act of Toleration, as it is commonly called, has done in the case before us,

By the Act of *Uniformity*, every person is required to conform to the mode of worship established in this country. The enforcement of penalties upon this subject, a subsequent Act has, under certain circumstances, suspended; whilst, at the same time, the Act itself, the operation of which those penalties were meant to secure, is suffered to remain in being. May we not conclude from hence, that the legislators saw no reason to alter their opinion with respect to the Act of *Uniformity* itself; although, upon consideration, they thought proper, in particular cases, to leave it to produce its effect upon the mind, unassisted by its appointed sanction.

The title of *Toleration Act*, therefore, which use has now familiarized to the ear, seems to be derived rather from the meaning which popular interpretation has affixed to the Act in question, than from the real intention of the Act itself. For an exemption from penalties, which the policy of former times had inflicted upon certain irregular practices, cannot be considered so much a toleration of those practices, as an acknowledgment, on the part of Government, that religious opinions, so long as they do not interfere with what is deemed to be the welfare of the state, are no longer considered objects for temporal coercion.

But in this case, as in some others, in which the prejudices and passions of mankind are deeply engaged, the conclusion has been carried beyond the premises; and the legislature has been understood to say more than was ever meant to be said upon this subject; the setting free from legal restraint certain religious distinctions and practices having been considered, by many, to amount to a justification, or even *establishment* of them. Whereas the Act of Toleration, as it is called, *tolerates nothing*; if by toleration is to be understood a justification of practices, against which temporal penalties had been heretofore denounced. A suspension of those penalties is all that it pretends to. But a suspension of penalties, whilst the law to which they have been annexed continues unrepealed, as it has been already observed, does not lessen the obligation of that law, though it may destroy its effect.

But upon the supposition that the Act of Toleration did more than it does; that it not only suspended the penalties by which a conformity to the established worship was designed to be enforced, but that it moreover repealed every civil law that related to that subject; such a concession would make no alteration in the case before us. For the obligation to church

unity is not derived from the authority of the *civil*, but from that of the *Divine* law. It is originally grounded upon the revealed will of the Founder of the Christian church; who could not give a more striking proof of the necessity and importance of this Christian principle, than by making it the subject of his most solemn prayer on a very particular occasion. Nor could the Apostle give a more plain description of the nature of it, than by making the human body a type or emblem of the Christian church; to the end that the members of the latter should draw an argument for their constant communion with each other, from the consideration of the joint fellowship and united operation of the members of the former.

Wherever, then, the church of CHRIST exists, an obligation to communion with it is binding upon the conscience of every Christian, by virtue of that Divine law which accompanied its establishment. This Divine law is paramount to every human injunction upon the subject. Whatever liberty, therefore, the Act of Toleration may be supposed to give, with respect to Christian conformity, must be understood as given in a case, in which *no human legislature has any liberty to grant*. The civil penalties which were de-

signed to secure it, having been removed, the law to which they were annexed is left to stand upon the original ground of its supposed agreement with the revealed will of God; consequently, the obligation to church unity is just what it was in the primitive days of the church, before civil policy interfered with the business.

And though in this case civil policy, by withdrawing its influence, cease to assist the operation of the Divine law, it does not, therefore, lessen its obligation. For by whatever rules of political expediency the conduct of the magistrate may be governed, certain it is, that the greater power cannot be overruled by the lesser one. The sin of schism, therefore, or a wilful separation from the church of CHRIST, is just what the word of God has pronounced it to be, whatever may be the determination of the magistrate upon the subject; and all that he has hitherto determined upon it in this country, has been to leave it to the judgment of its proper tribunal.

It is to be lamented, indeed, that an indulgence, originating, we trust, in charity, and designed to produce good effects, should have operated to the more general disunion of the members of the Christian church. But certain it is, that the Act which

suspends the penalties which were designed to enforce the obligation to church communion, has, in its operation, tended to increase the evil, which the original interference of the legislature was in this case intended to prevent. That sanction which the legislature has been supposed (by a misinterpretation of the Act in question) to give to every separation from the Christian church, has in fact proved the most fatal blow that the unity of that church ever received. For, according to the remonstrance of the House of Commons, in answer to CHARLES the Second's declaration from Breda, " it has (in a manner) established schism by a law; made the whole government of the church precarious, and the censures of it of no moment or consideration; and been the cause of increasing sects and sectaries, by introducing that loose way of thinking upon the subject of church communion, which makes it a matter of indifference with many people, what place of worship they frequent, or with what society of religionists they are connected: a circumstance, which annihilates, as it were, the sin of schism, by removing out of sight all those discriminating marks, to be found in the writings of the Apostles and first Christians, by which the

church of CHRIST, as a society at unity within itself, is distinguished."

Before we finish this head, it may be proper to say one short word to guard against wrong conclusions.

As ministers of the church of CHRIST upon conviction, we must lament, in common with all sound members of it, that there should be any such thing as separation from it; and it is our duty, so far as persuasion and argument will go, to prevent it. But knowing that diversity of opinions in religious matters is the unavoidable result of human imperfection and human liberty, and that offences must come; we are prepared, in what we conceive to be the true spirit of our religion, to accompany such events with that charitable hope which one Christian may bestow upon another, though of a different opinion. At the same time we should do less than our duty, did we not clearly point out what has been here attempted, the light in which, according to our judgment, the Act of Toleration should be seen by every member of the Christian church; reminding him, that, upon the supposition that a wilful separation from the church is sinful in the eyes of God, of which, it is presumed, no reasonable doubt can

be entertained, no act of any human legislature can make it otherwise.

Separatists from the church, therefore, under the supposed countenance of Government, would do well to consider, that a *civil* act in this case (as we have above observed) respects them only as members of a *civil* society; but furnishes no proper standard of judgment for their conduct as *Christians*; in which character, they become amenable to the law of that LORD, by whom they will be judged, and from whose sentence there lies no appeal.

DISCOURSE IX.

*On the Right of PRIVATE JUDGMENT in
Religious Matters.*

UPON the *right of private judgment* in religious matters much more perhaps has been said, than the subject will warrant.

The Apostle, indeed, directs us to “prove all things,” but at the same time to “hold fast that which is good.” From whence it may be concluded, that there is a difference between a blind and implicit obedience to authority in religious matters, and a total exemption from obligation on that head; between taking our religion entirely upon trust from others, or thinking it to be a part of Christian liberty, to make what religion we please for ourselves. The one leads back to the dark days of bigotry and superstition, the other renders the establishment of a church, as a society under regular government, altogether impracticable.

In fact, the right of private judgment in religious matters respects man in the relation in which he stands to his fellow-creatures; the exercise of which, so far as it concerns himself only, no other man has a right to control. But this consideration, though it tend to secure a privilege, claimed by every member of civilized society, must nevertheless, when applied to the subject immediately before us, be measured by a sacred standard, before it can become a safe principle of human conduct. The phrase, therefore, is open to an ambiguous meaning; and calculated, if not to offer incense to that idol of the natural man, human reason, at least to cherish an idea, which has too often led to a dangerous conclusion. Man, in the affairs of this world, may assume a right to judge for himself in a case upon which he is not qualified to form a judgment; and so long as his exercise of that right interferes not with the authority of the magistrate, or the welfare of the community, he may be indulged in his folly. But in religious matters no man can have a right to judge otherwise than God has judged for him. The ordinances of CHRIST, and the truths of his religion, are necessary, because he has made them so; that necessity therefore must continue the same, whether

we observe them, or not. For the religion of CHRIST, whatever be man's opinion upon it, will be precisely what it is, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and it is at his peril, if he do not conform to it.

To say, therefore, that man has a right to worship GOD in the way he thinks proper; in other words, to make a religion for himself; is to place all religions upon the same level as to the Divine favour, and to render an appeal to revelation wholly unnecessary; by leading him to conclude, that he is at liberty to set up a standard of right and wrong for himself in this case, instead of accepting with humility that Divine standard which has in wisdom been set up for him.

To enter more at large into this subject, after what has been already said, under the head of Liberty of Conscience, would be to trespass upon the reader.

It may be necessary, however, to take notice of one mode of settling the minds of ill-informed people upon this subject; which, from its plausibility, has gained much credit in the world.

There are authors, unhappily for this country, whose manner of writing, upon certain subjects,

seems calculated to confound every thing that looks like order and government in society; by setting up the majesty of the people (to make use of the absurd phraseology of republicanism) as the origin of power in the state; and the sacred right, or rather mistaken plea of *Protestantism*, as a sanction for divisions in the church. According to these writers, who either do not understand, or purposely misrepresent, the principle of *protestantism*, the right of judgment in religious matters, which the church of England pleads in justification of her secession from the church of Rome, is to be pleaded, by every individual Christian, for his separation from the church of England; as if by *protestantism* were chiefly meant, a right of separation from the church; without regard to the cause of it. But upon examining the two cases, we shall find them to be by no means parallel; and consequently no conclusion is to be drawn from the one to the other.

The separation of the church of England from the church of Rome, was grounded, not upon the idea, that she had a right to form a church for herself upon any new plan of her own; but upon the idea, that it was no longer compatible with the spiritual welfare of her members to hold communion with a

corrupt church. It was neither the government nor doctrine of the church of CHRIST, that were protested against on this occasion, but the corruptions that had taken place in both; the usurped supremacy of the bishop of Rome, and those dangerous tenets, which were incompatible with some of the most essential articles of the Christian faith. In protesting against the Pope's usurped supremacy, the church of England did no more than the church of Rome herself had done upon a former occasion, when GREGORY the First protested against the usurpation of the same title by JOHN bishop of Constantinople; a title which that great prelate did not scruple to call blasphemous, and the usurper of it the forerunner of Antichrist. The churches of Rome and Constantinople were two separate branches of the church of CHRIST; to their existence as such, their holding communion with each other was not essential. The church of England is also a separate branch of the church of CHRIST; its separation, therefore, from the church of Rome is a circumstance, by which its existence as a church can in no wise be affected; because it possesses within itself all those characteristic marks by which a church, as a society of CHRIST's forming, is distinguished; and of which it was in full

possession, before its connection with the church of Rome took place. The protestantism, therefore, of the church of England, consists in the right which one independent branch of the church of CHRIST claims, of protesting, in its collective character, against the errors of another branch of it; with which, from local circumstances, it may, or may not, hold communion.

For by the unity of the Christian church, we do not understand a *necessary* communion between all branches of that church, however dispersed, or however distinguished from each other; for this must depend upon circumstances: but that unity which every branch of the Christian church possesses within itself, when all its members, being joined together in the same mind, and the same doctrine, live in dutiful obedience to those who have the rule over them, and in Christian fellowship with each other.

But the idea annexed to the word *protestantism*, by the Dissenter from the church of England, is, that it establishes the right, which every individual claims, of judging for himself in religious matters; and separating from the church, of which he ought to continue a member, for any reason which to him may appear sufficient; or, should he be so disposed, for no

reason at all. He who cannot see the difference between these two cases, must, it is to be feared, be in a condition somewhat similar to that in which the Jews were, when their invincible prejudices would not suffer them to acknowledge our SAVIOUR's character; they had eyes to see, but would not see. For in the one case, we behold the deliberate act of an independent branch of the church of CHRIST, vindicating its own rights against the usurped tyranny of another branch of the same church, and breaking off communion with it, for the sake of preserving the purity of its own worship; in the other, we see the act of the individual Christian, setting up his own way of thinking as his definitive standard of judgment in religious matters; a mode of proceeding absolutely incompatible with the existence of the church as a society; and casting himself out of her communion, for the sake of gratifying some private prejudice or opinion.

To us these two cases appear widely different; but not more so, I believe, than they would have done to those original foreign reformers,* who, on their first withdrawing from a corrupt church, la-

* CALVIN and BEZA in particular.

mented the necessity they were under, of separating from the established government of the church of CHRIST; and thought that no curse could be too bad for those who separated from it, when in a reformed state. Their subsequent change of sentiment upon this subject, in conformity to times and circumstances, does so little credit either to the men or their cause, that we are glad to pass it by in silence.

Ever since the æra of the Reformation, the church of England has been considered to be the firmest bulwark of Protestantism. So far as the Dissenter agrees with her, in protesting against the errors of the Romish church; so far he may be said to be at unity with her: but when that right, which justifies the Dissenter, in common with the church of England, in separating from a corrupt branch of the Christian church, is extended to justify his separation from a branch of the church, confessedly not in the same state of corruption, and of whose members no unlawful terms of communion are required; and to authorise his setting up a church of his own, independent of episcopal government; the Dissenter quits the original ground of protestantism, and places himself upon that of schism; and in such case he becomes a *schismatic* grafted upon a *protestant*.

Freedom of inquiry into the grounds of religion is readily acknowledged to be the distinguishing principle of the protestant cause. But this principle, if not exercised under proper restraint, will destroy the cause it is designed to serve. That law must be useless, from which every man has a plea of private exemption lodged in his own breast. And all constituted authority in the church must be annihilated, if the right of private judgment in religious matters, in the extent to which it is carried by some people, is to be admitted.

Our SAVIOUR we find giving direction in a particular case, for an appeal to the judgment of the church; from whence we are obviously led to conclude, that it was his design that a certain degree of respect should be paid to its decisions. Matt. xviii. 17. The church, we are moreover told by the Apostle, is “the pillar and ground of the truth.” 1 Tim. iii. 15. By which we understand, that the revelation of the Gospel is a sacred deposit, which CHRIST has left with his church, to the end that it might be propagated and supported in the world by that spirit and authority, which were committed to its ministers for that purpose. Therefore the bishops, who are those spiritual fathers, to whose care CHRIST

has committed his church upon earth, are called upon by the Apostle, not only “ to speak and exhort, but also to rebuke with all authority, and to let no man despise them.”

Where authority is committed, it is certainly with the intent that, so far as the exercise of this authority properly extends, it ought to be obeyed. In the case before us, then, we do not hesitate to say, that in proportion as the authority of the church is disregarded, the pillar of truth is shaken, and the cause of Christianity suffers.

In consequence, indeed, of the abuse that has been made of the spiritual authority, many have thought it not possible to be too much upon their guard against it. To steer clear, therefore, of the impositions of the Romish priesthood, they have hastily determined to pay no attention to that sacred office at all. But this, surely, is to correct one error by running into its opposite; by exchanging a blind credulity for a contemptuous disregard for a Divine institution.

Without encroaching, then, upon the right of private judgment, which, to a certain degree is acknowledged, we may venture to say in support of ecclesiastical authority, that if CHRIST hath appointed certain persons in his church, distinguished by their

station and office to be teachers and guides, it is the duty of the members of that church to be taught and guided by them, so far as their teaching and guidance conform to the revelation which they have in commission to publish. When the teaching or direction of these appointed guides appears, not in the mere private opinion of the party, but upon evident and substantial reasons, to be contrary to the revealed will of God, they can no longer be a proper rule of duty; in such case the member of the church exercises the right of private judgment. But it must be remembered, at the same time, that though the private Christian be justified in the sight of God for withholding active obedience from any rule or practice, which in his conscience are inconsistent with the laws of CHRIST, for he is to obey God rather than man; yet if in this case, instead of patiently submitting to the penalties denounced against his disobedience, he openly resist the authority of his appointed governors, by a conduct in direct opposition to their injunctions; he thereby renders himself accountable to God for rebellion against the established government of his church.

Upon this subject, then, we make the revealed will of God the sole standard of judgment, and call

for no submission to the clergy that may be proved to be incompatible with it; but in doubtful cases, upon which a difference of opinion prevails, we claim that degree of deference to the determination of the appointed guides and teachers of the church, which a respect for their station demands, and the end for which their office was instituted, absolutely requires.

With less authority than this, it is not to be conceived, how it is possible for ministers of the church to execute the duties of their station. For if, in doubtful cases, where no positive law of God is to be found for the direction of the conscience, or where the law produced is differently interpreted, the opinion of the ruler and guide, of him who is appointed by God to teach in the church, is not to overrule that of the party to be taught; we have a government instituted without any authority annexed to it. For in this case every private Christian is left in a state of independence, to judge and determine for himself; upon which plan, the church, as a visible society, (the very being of which implies an authority to command, and an obligation to obey) could no where exist.

Subject to the above limitations, the ecclesiastical authority is no abridgment of Christian liberty. Under these limitations, therefore, we feel ourselves

justified in supporting its cause against the right of private judgment; taken in that unlimited sense, in which its zealous advocates are disposed to consider it.

Whilst, therefore, we protest against the Popish extreme, of leading men blindfold in their Christian profession, as inconsistent with the character of reasonable beings; we at the same time do not scruple to affirm, that every man is not qualified to form a judgment for himself in religious matters, much less to set up for a teacher and guide to his brethren. Were this the case, the pastoral office had been an useless one; and God, who does nothing in vain, would never have delivered a commission to *particular* persons, which might, with equal advantage, have been exercised indiscriminately by all: much less would He have thought it necessary to have furnished those persons with extraordinary powers for the discharge of it.

It was a complaint made by one of the primitive writers of the church, “that the sense of the scriptures was the only piece of knowledge, which every one thought himself a competent judge of, without pains or study, without the help of a guide or instructor:” a presumption, which the levity and thoughtlessness of the age have tended to increase. But whilst

there are things hard to be understood in the scriptures, which unlearned and unstable men did in the Apostles' days wrest to their own destruction; the notion that any man, without the aid of study or learning, is qualified to be an expounder of the word of God; "rightly to divide the word of truth," as the Apostle expresses it; seems calculated not so much to serve the cause of religion, as that of folly, enthusiasm, and imposture.

If men, therefore, are determined to exercise this boasted right of private judgment, at all events, upon the idea that Christian liberty authorises every man to worship God in his own way; they should at the same time remember, that if through pride, or self-conceit, they despise instruction; and by turning their backs upon those pastors whom God has appointed to direct them, they fall into error, or prove the means of leading others into it; they must thank themselves for the consequences.

Supposing it possible that men might err with the church, they would have this plea in their favour; that they had followed those, whom, according to the constitution of the country in which God had placed them, they had been taught to look up to as their guides. Whereas if they have left the church,

and the truth together, the choice has been their own; and they will have two things to answer for: first, the embracing error, when truth was before them; and in the next place, the breaking the peace of the church, of which, according to CHRIST'S institution, and upon the supposition that no unlawful terms of communion have been required from them, they ought to have continued dutiful members.

The loose way of thinking that prevails upon this subject, can make no alteration in the subject itself. The plan upon which CHRIST has established his church in the world must continue, till its object shall have been accomplished. And though this church, from the days of its first settlement, hath been passing from country to country, as the inhabitants of each became respectively unworthy of its longer continuance among them; yet for our comfort we are assured, that the gates of hell shall not completely prevail against it. In one part of the world or another, it will be found to the end of time.

How long it may be in the counsel of GOD to continue it in this country, He only knows. But the present divided state of Christians, so much lamented by all sound members of the church, together with that too general indifference for all religious

opinions, which, under the fallacious term of *liberality of sentiment*, now prevails, holds out to us no very promising prospect.

So long indeed as a notion prevails, to which the practice of the world gives countenance, that it matters not what religious profession a man makes, or with what religious society he connects himself; it will be impossible to say any thing upon the subject of religious conformity, that will not be liable to cavil and objection; because, under these circumstances, we are not dealing with the reason, so much as with the prejudices and passions of mankind; which are always, more or less, in a state of rebellion against every thing that wears the appearance of restraint or submission.

But if men will mistake the liberty with which CHRIST has made them free; namely, a deliverance from the dominion of over-ruling passions, from the absurdities of heathenish idolatry, and the yoke of the Jewish ritual; for a freedom from all restraint, an uncontrolled exertion of private judgment in religious matters, and an independence of ecclesiastical institutions; we cannot be surprised, that their conduct upon this subject should militate against the plan laid down by CHRIST for the establishment of his

church. Whilst those prejudices and passions, which the Christian religion was designed either to regulate or subdue, maintain their ground in the human mind, the standard of judgment set up in the Gospel will be rendered in a great degree useless. Men, under these circumstances, will persuade themselves, either that it does not apply to them, or by some fallacy or other will contrive to evade the conclusion, that must otherwise have been drawn from it. Thus *self-deception* is industriously put in practice, in order to steer clear of that troublesome thing called *self-conviction*.

In fact, human pride is, generally speaking, so much mixed up with human error, that till one can be separated from the other, there is little hope of effecting an agreement of sentiment upon any disputed subject; for men will not see what they are not disposed to acknowledge.

But when men “*become as little children,*” possessed of that meek, lowly, and teachable temper, which alone renders them capable or desirous of information; the Bible, although it cannot speak a plainer language than it does at present, will then be better understood; because men will sit down to it, not with a view to confirm opinions already embraced, but to draw from it, in simplicity and sincerity,

that knowledge, which by Divine grace it was designed to convey to all disposed to receive it.

In that case, they will perceive, that one great object which CHRIST had in view in the establishment of his church, was, that the members of it might be joined together in the bond of peace and unity; in the language of ST. PAUL, that “there might be no schism in the body:” and consequently, that no gratification of private fancy or opinion, much less of prejudice or passion, ought to be weighed in the scale against this most *essential* consideration. ST. PAUL has so fully determined this point in the case of some of his Corinthian converts, by telling them, that even the miraculous gifts of which they were in possession, would prove no justification for their disturbing the peace and order of the church, as to leave nothing necessary to be added on that subject. In the judgment of ST. PAUL, the gift of prophecy, the understanding all mysteries, and all knowledge, and all faith, were as nothing in comparison with that charity, by which it was designed that the members of the Christian church should be joined together.

In the judgment of the world, what was of such consequence in the early days of the church, is now,

we are sorry to think, become of no consequence at all; and that harmony among Christians, for which our SAVIOUR earnestly prayed, and which the Apostles and primitive rulers of the church laboured so constantly to promote, is now become a matter of comparative indifference: as we must conclude to be the case, when we see men, not only without those miraculous gifts, upon which the Corinthians presumed, but oft times without that degree of knowledge necessary to qualify them to understand the letter of the Gospel, which they undertake to publish, drawing congregations after them, and making the support of some private conceit, or the slightest difference of opinion upon matters not essential to the Christian cause, a sufficient ground for separation from their appointed teachers.

But would men consider, that charity and humility are two distinguishing marks of a Christian, they would feel themselves disposed to believe more, and to dispute less. Would the men to whom we now more particularly allude consider, that the submission of human reason to the revealed word of GOD is part of that self-abasement, which the Christian is called upon to practise; whose every "thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of

CHRIST;" they would stand with less confidence upon ground of their own choosing, than they do at present; and would feel themselves more in a disposition to be taught, than to teach. For, without being an advocate for blind credulity, the evils of which have been abundantly manifested, we do not hesitate to say, that there are in religion many things which, by the generality of mankind, must in some degree be taken upon trust; because the generality of mankind are not qualified to form a competent judgment of the evidence upon which they stand.

Whilst the best informed will, upon the consideration that now "we know only in part," be most ready to subscribe to the idea, that in certain cases the honour of GOD is more advanced by the submission, than by the exertion, of the human understanding.

And if this idea prevail, when applied to subjects of primary consideration, as revealed articles of faith; it will not surely, when the peace of the church is concerned, be found inapplicable to matters, which revelation may have left more undetermined. "For the spirit of CHRIST, (as Bishop ANDREWS long since observed) is the spirit of ingenuity, which will freely submit itself to that which is expedient, even in things of their own nature lawful. The not ob-

serving whereof, with good heed and discretion, hath in old time filled the world with many a superstitious imagination; and in our days hath healed the imagination, and superstition, and hypocrify, with another of riot and licentious liberty, as bad as the former, and a great deal worse."

The only remedy for this evil, the fruitful source of all sin and heresy in the world, is to be found in the promotion of that charitable spirit of the Gospel, "which envieth not; which is not puffed up; which beaveth not unseemly; which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things;" rather than that brotherly love, the bond of Christian perfectness, should be broken. A spirit, which it is my duty to press most earnestly upon Christians; from the full conviction, that envyings, divisions, and heresies, are those works of the flesh, which most effectually serve the cause of that grand enemy, whose constant employment it is, so far as in him lies, to render abortive the Christian scheme for the salvation of fallen man.

DISCOURSE X.

On the Advantages attendant upon a conscientious Communion with the CHURCH; together with the Disadvantages consequent upon a wilful Separation from it.

THE weight which any practice or opinion ought to have upon the mind, must depend, in a great degree, on the conclusion to be drawn from it. Were not the advantages and disadvantages consequent on a communion with, or separation from, the church to be made apparent; all that has been written on these subjects might, for the most part, be considered as waste paper. For if nothing is to be gained or lost by the determination of man's conduct in this respect, it certainly becomes a matter of indifference, with what society of Christians he is connected; and in this case he might, in religious matters at least, be left at liberty to follow the guidance of his own fancy or opinion.

But if the church is to be seen in the light in which we have placed it, as a society of CHRIST's forming, for the express purpose of men being saved in it from the corruption and condemnation of a wicked world; it becomes a matter of essential consideration with every man, whether he be a member of that church or not.

To enable the Christian, then, to draw the conclusion necessary to confirm his judgment in this case, we proceed, in conformity with our plan, to point out the advantages and disadvantages consequent upon a communion with, or separation from, the church. In doing this, it may be proper to consider man, first, in the relation in which he stands to GOD, as redeemed by the blood of his crucified Son; and, secondly, in that in which he stands to his fellow-creatures, as member of a civilized society.

It is a position, we presume, not to be controverted, that if the salvation of fallen man be an act of free grace on the part of GOD, (as Divine revelation has informed us that it is) man ought thankfully to receive it on the terms upon which it is bestowed; and of course to conform himself to any plan set on foot by GOD for the purpose of carrying his gracious design into effect. The probable consequence of his

acting otherwise, must have that weight in the mind of every reasonable man, as to induce him to steer wide of the possibility of it.

In a matter of this essential importance, no gratification of private conceit or prejudice, no attachment to particular sect or opinion, will be suffered to preponderate against the single consideration of conformity to the revealed will of GOD. "What is written, how readest thou?" will be the answer which every wise man will be ready to receive and to profit by; considering that He who opened the gate of everlasting life, must be the surest guide to conduct man into it.

Upon an appeal to this revealed will, as delivered to us in the sacred writings, we have the plan of Divine wisdom in the salvation of fallen man so clearly laid before us, that whatever we may in charity hope in the case of others, we are at least qualified to form some decisive conclusions in our own. Were it not so, it would be for little purpose, it should seem, that the sacred records have been put into our hands.

Upon an appeal to these records, we find the church called, as hath been above observed, the body of CHRIST; that body, of which He is the *Head* and

Saviour. “CHRIST (says the Apostle) is the *Head* of the church, and He is the *Saviour* of the body.” Eph. v. 23. And we nowhere read of him in the character of a *Saviour*, but with reference to that church, which he is said to have purchased with his blood. In consequence of this purchase, the church is considered to be the peculiar property of CHRIST; every member of it, therefore, must have a peculiar interest in him. The church, then, according to the idea which the scripture has taught us to form of it, is that spiritual association, which draws as it were the line of distinction between those who are living without GOD, and consequently without hope, and those who are formally admitted into covenant with Him, and sealed with “the holy spirit of promise, as an earnest of their future inheritance.”

Taken in this light, the church on earth may be considered as a preparatory stage in the road to man’s future happiness; it being a school of discipline established by CHRIST, for the purpose of making every member of it meet for the possession of his heavenly inheritance. In consequence of man’s admission into this school, he is no longer considered as “a stranger and foreigner, but as a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of GOD.”

Thus the Apostle, in conformity with this idea of the church being a school of discipline, for the purpose of spiritualizing the fallen creature man, tells us; that “He who ascended up on high, that he might fill all things; gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers; for *the perfecting of the saints*, for the *work of the ministry*, for the *edifying of the body of CHRIST*; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the SON of GOD, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST.” Eph. iv. 11.

After it was determined upon, in the Divine counsels, that JESUS CHRIST should lay down his life a sacrifice for sin, thereby to render it possible for man to be saved; the next step taken towards the accomplishment of the great work of salvation was, it should seem, to prepare and qualify man to reap the benefit of it. To this end, GOD gave CHRIST to be head over all things to his church; that a spiritual principle being set at work, for the purpose of counteracting the effects of that evil principle by which the world had been destroyed, all men might not perish; but that the church, at least, considered as a “building properly constructed, and fitly framed

together, according to the plan of its divine Master-builder, might grow into an holy temple in the LORD."

Hence we see the reason, why those who were to be saved were first to be made *members of the church*; the church being, according to the Divine plan, the ordinary road through which they were to travel from this world to the next. "The LORD," we read, "added daily to the church such as should be saved." Acts ii. 47. And in the case of the devout CORNELIUS, He vouchsafed a particular revelation, for the purpose of securing his admission into it; a circumstance which leaves us in no doubt with respect to the importance of the object in view upon the occasion.

The advantages and disadvantages consequent, then, upon a communion with, or separation from, the church, may here begin to be estimated.

Communion with the church is conformity to the Divine plan for our salvation; separation from it is setting up a plan of our own, if not in opposition to, at least in some degree independent of, the former. The one is putting ourselves under God's training; by becoming disciples in his school, conforming to those rules, and making use of those means, which have been appointed by Him for the advancement of our spiritual concerns. The other is, in a degree at

least, taking the work of salvation into our own hands; by setting up a system of Christian education for ourselves. In the one case, we submit, as in humility we ought, to the wisdom of God; in the other we make ourselves wiser than God, by an attempt to travel to heaven in a road different from that which He has graciously marked out for us: a conduct which leads to something like the following impious conclusion—that, in the great work of redemption, God was not the best judge of the manner in which it was to be carried into the most compleat effect.

But, alas! there always hath been in man a strong propensity to be the carver and contriver of his own happiness; in other words, to be an *independent* being. ADAM, through the persuasion of the tempter, would be wiser than God; and his fall was the consequence of his folly. The happiness of man must depend upon his obedience to the will of his Maker. But this is a truth not so generally acted upon, as it is acknowledged. The unregenerate man, feels at all times the same disposition that ADAM did, to follow a will of his own, in contradiction to the Divine will; and to govern himself, rather than be governed by God. To this end he sets out with doubting,

then with disbelieving, what GOD has revealed; and being advanced thus far in his progress towards rebellion, his next step actually commences it by forming plans and schemes of his own, which he thinks better calculated to answer the purpose in view than those which come recommended by an authority, which he feels a natural indisposition to admit. It is a portion of this strong propensity, which man has to judge and act for himself, that prevails with the generality to separate from the church; upon the plausible, though mistaken idea, of serving GOD more acceptably in a way of their own: without considering, that it is not the worshipping GOD in the way they please, but in the way He has appointed, that will secure to them his blessing. To judge in some measure of the consequences resulting from such self-willed conduct, so far as they belong to our present subject, it may be proper to consider, what we have in the church, and what out of it; that the reasonable man, balancing the advantages of communion with, against those of a separation from it, may judge for himself.

From the authority of the sacred writings we conclude, that where the Christian sacraments are *duly* administered, by persons regularly appointed to that

sacred office, according to the plan originally laid down by the Apostles, there we find the church of CHRIST. From the same authority we learn, that this church is to continue to the end of the world. The unity consequently of the Christian church must mean the same now that it ever did; and a separation from it must be attended with consequences as dangerous in the present day as at any former period. For the church of CHRIST is but *one*; and all the promises of the Gospel are exclusively made to that *one* church. None consequently but members of that church, can lay claim to an interest in those promises; upon the same principle, that none but those who have been admitted members of any human society, can lay claim to the privileges belonging to it. Thus the direction given to those who were struck with St. PETER's sermon was this, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts ii. 38. By which we understand, that admission into the church was considered by the Apostle as a necessary qualification for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, from the general tenour of scripture, it is to be concluded, that none but those who are members of the church, can be

partakers of the spirit by which it is accompanied. Without, therefore, presuming to determine upon the condition of those who are out of the church, we are at least justified in saying, that their hope of salvation must be built upon some general idea of Divine mercy, to which the member of the church has a *covenanted claim*. In the one case we have an act of **Grace** indeed; but for the performance of which there is no security, because it does not stand on the sure ground of any revealed promise: whilst in the other we build on a positive act of Covenant, which assuredly will take place, according to the conditions on which it has been made; because “He is faithful who hath promised.”

In this *one* church, then, we have the sacraments of **CHRIST**’s appointment; as seals of that covenant, by which fallen man lays claim to eternal life. In this *one* church, we have the ambassadors for **CHRIST**, whose sacred office it is to administer, in the name of Him whom they are commissioned to represent, the sacraments of that covenant, which **GOD** on his part is thereby engaged to fulfil. In this *one* church, we have moreover the spirit of **CHRIST** accompanying his own ordinances; according to the promise made at the original establishment of this church,

that He would “ be with it always, even to the end of the world.”

Such are the essential advantages attendant upon communion with the church.

Let us now consider for a moment the disadvantages consequent upon a separation from it.

When you leave the church, then, it should be remembered, you leave the ministers and sacraments of CHRIST behind you. You may indeed appoint other ministers, and institute other sacraments; but let it be observed, these ministers are not the ambassadors of CHRIST; nor are the sacraments which they administer, the sacraments of CHRIST: for the essence of an ambassador's office is, that he should be *commissioned* by the party whom he represents, and in whose name he acts; and the essence of a covenant, of which the sacraments are seals, is, that it should be binding upon the party in whose name it is made. But ministers of the separation are not ambassadors of CHRIST, because they have never been sent by him; and with respect to the benefit to be derived from the sacraments administered by them, their disciples must not look to GOD, for this obvious reason, because GOD is not bound but by covenants of his own making,

Now the effect to be looked for from the Christian sacraments depends not upon the mere performance of the ministry, in the administration of the elements of water in baptism, or of bread and wine in the LORD'S-Supper; (for in that case, any minister, however appointed, might answer the purpose;) but upon the spirit of GOD accompanying ordinances of his own institution. And there is little reason to suppose, that the Divine blessing will accompany irregular ministrations, call them by what name you please; which are not only not sanctified by Divine appointment, but are moreover in direct opposition to that order, which is essential to the peace and preservation of the Christian church. Whoever, therefore, hopes to receive benefit from religious services, must perform them according to GOD's will, rather than *his own*; for let our religion be ever so right and good in our own estimation, it cannot, on that account, have any *covenanted* title to those privileges and blessings, which are by Divine authority annexed to the church of CHRIST.

In this sense, the primitive fathers are to be understood, when they say, that there is no salvation out of the holy Catholic Church. By which is meant, that no *covenanted* plan of salvation has been revealed

to man, save that which is addressed to him as a member of the church of CHRIST.

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our GOD.” Where, therefore, no knowledge has been vouchsafed, no judgment should be passed. In all such cases every considerate man concludes, with faithful ABRAHAM, that “the Judge of all the earth will do right.” But so far as revelation holds out a light to direct, we are authorised and required to judge; because a revelation must be supposed to be given for that purpose.

In this revelation then we read, that “no man cometh to the Father, but by CHRIST.” And according to the same authority, to have an interest in CHRIST, man must be admitted into his church. In conformity to the general tenour of this revelation, then, we hesitate not to say, that there is absolute security in the church for every *sound* member of it, and that we know of no security out of it. The difference between the condition of a member of the church of CHRIST at the bar of trial, and of one that is not, appearing to us to be this: the former, in arrest of judgment, pleads a *covenanted title* to the benefit of an act of grace passed by the Judge in his favour; the latter, having no such title to plead, is

obliged to throw himself *unconditionally* on the mercy of the court. Upon a matter, therefore, of the utmost importance; when there is absolute *certainly* founded on the revealed word on one side, and no specific declaration on the other; the wise man, who has considered the subject, will, it is presumed, take no long time to settle his judgment.

To the foregoing advantages and disadvantages of primary importance, consequent upon communion with, or separation from, the church, may be added others; which, though of a subordinate kind, will not fail to have their weight in the scale of every reasonable man. When Christians assemble in the house of God, it is understood to be for the purpose of joining in those acts of religious worship, suitable to their condition as fallen, sinful, and dependent creatures. These acts are distinguished by the appropriate titles of confession, prayer, and thanksgiving. The first, the necessary condition of forgiveness; "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive them." The second, the condition upon which all Divine blessings are to be obtained; "Ask," says our blessed Master, "and it shall be given unto you." The third, that demonstration of gratitude for mercies and blessings bestowed, which will ever

be proportionate to the sense of the obligation. In the due performance of these several acts of worship, accompanied with gestures of body proper to denote that humiliation which ought to possess the mind of sinners, when engaged in communion with their God, consists, for the most part, the public service of religion.

Such is the idea which the scriptures lead us to form upon this subject. From whence it appears, that public worship must be (what the reason of the thing tells us it ought to be) the joint act of the congregation assembled; that with one mind, and one mouth, GOD may be glorified.

Thus EUSEBIUS describes the state of the church in its early days: "There was one and the same power of the Holy Spirit, which passed through all the members; one soul in all; the same alacrity of faith; one common consent in chaunting forth the praises of GOD." For by the nature and construction of church communion, there is that harmony and consent of mind and mouth required in public worship, from whence all public prayers and sacrifices are supposed to derive their force. "If two of you," says our LORD, "shall agree upon earth to ask any thing, it shall be done for you of my Father which is in heaven; for where two or three are gathered

together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." There must then be a consent, or, according to the original, a συμφωνησις, or *symphony*, as well as a meeting together, in public worship: whereas the worshippers have all one common mouth, so they ought all to have one heart and one mind, as ST. CLEMENT says, " Ἡμεῖς ὅν ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ ἐπὶ τοῦ κυρίου συναχθέντες, ὡς ἐξ ἑνὸς στόματος βοήσωμεν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐκτενῶς," &c. Let us therefore, being gathered together with one mind into one place, cry ardently to God as with one mouth, that we may be partakers of his glorious promises. Hence it is, that ST. IGNATIUS speaks of *μία προσευχή, μίαι δέησις, εἰς νῆς, μία ἐλπίς*, one prayer, one supplication, one mind, and one hope: and JUSTIN MARTYR* calls the prayers of the Christians, "*κοινὰ, εὐχαί*, common prayers: and ST. CYPRIAN† calls the public service of the church, "*unanymis oratio.*" In strict correspondence with which rational idea is that excellent prayer of ST. CHRYSOSTOM which concludes our church service, which is best understood in the original. " Ὁ τὰς κοῖνας ταύτας καὶ συμφωνῶνς ἡμῖν χαρισάμενος προσευχάς, ὁ καὶ δύο καὶ

* Apolog. i.

† Epist. ii.

τρίτῃ συμφώνῳσιν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι σε τὰς αἰτήσεις
 παρέχειν ἐπαγγειλαμενός.” “Thou who hast given
 us grace to make these *common* and *harmonious* pray-
 ers, and who hast promised to two or three praying
 in concert in Thy name to grant their petitions,” &c.

A conformity to this primitive pattern is the object
 which the church has always had in view, upon every
 public assembly of her members. To this end, in
 that branch of the church, to which we belong, they
 are furnished with a Liturgy, or stated form of service,
 so excellently constructed as to qualify, and at the
 same time to invite, the congregation assembled, to
 become parties in every act of religious worship that
 is going forward; that there may be no uninterested
 spectators in a business in which every individual is
 concerned, but that the united voice of supplication,
 prayer, and praise, may plead so powerfully at the
 Throne of Grace, as not to be resisted. And such, we
 will venture to say, is the plan best suited to the infir-
 mity of our condition, as best calculated to prevent
 the natural distractions of the human mind; by raising
 and keeping alive that spirit of devotion, necessary to
 qualify fallen man to hold communion with his Maker.

To this reasonable service performed in our church,
 let us now oppose what is, generally speaking, to be met

with out of it. And could Christians be prevailed upon to discard prejudice, there would, it is presumed, be but one opinion upon this subject. Out of the church, indeed, people are assembled, under various denominations, for the purpose of religious worship; and we are ready to give individuals credit for their pious intentions. But in what, it must be asked, does their religious worship consist? For certain it is, that in religious assemblies out of the church we have (generally speaking) no *public* form, either of confession, prayer, or thanksgiving; the whole attention of the congregation being directed to the performance of the officiating minister, whose service, be it ever so spiritual, (which, considering the qualification of very many who undertake it, we may venture to say, is not always the case;) is nevertheless the service of the minister rather than that of the congregation.

In the church the congregation are called upon to become *actual parties* in the service performed; in the words of DAVID, “to worship, bow down, and kneel before the LORD their Maker;” for the purpose of offering up at the Throne of Grace, with humble, penitent, and contrite hearts, the solemn sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving; the service performed there, consequently, is what it ought to be,

the joint service both of minister and people; all sinners before GOD, all supplicants for pardon, all petitioners for blessings.

Out of the church the congregation are obliged to be, for the most part, *bearers* only; it being scarce possible for them to join in petitions, or to lift up their voice with *one accord* in the celebration of praises, which they are unprepared to accompany. How great soever therefore the fervour of devotion on the part of the minister may be, and how acceptable soever his form of prayer, (if the public prayer of any *self-appointed* minister may be acceptable at the Throne of Grace) the congregation nevertheless, in consequence of their being little concerned in the service performed, can in reason have little to expect from the effect to be produced by it.

But exclusive of *unanimity* being absolutely necessary to accompany the public prayers of an assembled congregation, to entitle them to that characteristic distinction, it is moreover to be observed, (and a most important observation it is) that it was to prevent the subtle insinuation of false doctrines into the minds of the people, that the ministers of the church, for fifteen ages together, were not permitted to use their own prayers; and that none were allowed in public

congregations, but such as were approved and authoritatively enjoined.

This single consideration should, it might be supposed, be sufficient to place an attendance upon the service of the church, when contrasted with that performed in any other place of worship, in too striking a point of view, to render further enlargement on this head necessary.

But there is an idea which has long prevailed, upon which, though it may be considered as scarce furnishing a subject for serious argument, it may be proper, from the consideration of the many that are led astray by it, to say a few words. An ignorance with respect to the meaning of some particular passages of the sacred writings has given birth to a persuasion, which enthusiasm, that puts out the eye of reason, and destroys the sobriety of religion, has long been diligently employed in cherishing and supporting; namely, that to comply with the Apostolic idea of *praying with the spirit*, it is necessary that all forms should be set aside, as absolutely incompatible with that inspiration, supposed to be appropriate to extemporary effusions. But allowing that the spirit of God does assist men both in the matter and form of their prayers; it may be asked, whether we have

not as much reason to think, that the public prayers of the church were suggested by that spirit, as the prayers of any private individual? Nay, whether it is not more probable, that a company of learned and pious men, assembled for the purpose of composing a public liturgy for the use of the church, after having previously invoked the Divine assistance, should be favoured with that assistance, rather than any particular person; who, without premeditation or study, and oft times without any qualification for the work, takes upon himself to deliver an *extemporary* prayer? Is it to be imagined, that the Holy Spirit should give such a decided preference to that service, upon which least care and attention has been bestowed, as to vouchsafe to it such an exclusive title to his assistance; that in comparison with it the prayer of the church is to be considered as a lifeless form? If reason tell us that this cannot be the case, we shall not hesitate to conclude, that in using the liturgy of the church, we pray as much at least (if not more) the prayers of the spirit, than when we accompany any less regular service.

The judicious HOOKER, who had well considered this subject, writes thus decidedly upon it. “Of all helps for the performance of this service of prayer,

the greatest is that very set and standing order itself, which, framed with common advice, hath both for matter and form prescribed whatsoever is herein publicly done. No doubt, from God it hath proceeded; and by us it must be acknowledged a work of singular care and providence, that the church hath evermore held a prescript form of prayer, although not in all things every where the same, yet for the most part retaining still the same analogy. So that if the liturgies of all ancient churches throughout the world be compared amongst themselves, it may be easily perceived, they had all one original mould; and that the public prayer of the people of God, in churches thoroughly settled, did never use to be voluntary dictates, proceeding from any man's *extemporal* wit. To him which considereth the grievous and scandalous inconveniences, whereunto they make themselves daily subject, with whom any blind and secret corner is judged a fit house of common prayer; the manifold confusions which they fall into, where every man's private spirit and gift (as they term it) is the only bishop that ordaineth him to this ministry; the irksome deformities, whereby, through endless and senseless effusions of undigested prayers, they often times disgrace in most insufferable man-

ner the worthiest part of Christian duty towards God; who herein are subject to no certain order, but pray both what and how they list; to him, I say, which weigheth duly all these things, the reasons cannot be obscure, why God doth, in public prayer, so much respect the solemnity of places where the authority and calling of persons by whom, and the precise appointment, even with what words or sentences, his name should be called on amongst his people. The best stratagem that SATAN hath, who knoweth his kingdom to be no one way more shaken than by the public devout prayers of God's church, is by traducing the form and manner of them to bring them into contempt; and so to shake the force of all men's devotion towards them. From this, and from no other forge, hath proceeded a strange conceit, that to serve God with any set form of common prayer is superstitious. As tho' God himself did not frame to his priests the very speech wherewith they were charged to bless the people: or as if our LORD, even of purpose to prevent this fancy of *extemporal* and *voluntary* prayers, had not left us, of his own framing, one which might both remain as a part of the church liturgy, and serve as a pattern whereby to frame all other prayers with efficacy, yet without superfluity of words."*

* HOOKER's Eccl. Pol. book v.

But after all, it will perhaps be found, that this prevailing idea respecting spiritual prayer, in the sense in which it is too generally taken, has been grounded upon a misunderstanding of the Apostle's meaning upon this subject. "I will pray," says the Apostle, "with the *spirit*, I will pray with the *understanding* also." 1 Cor. xiv. 15. To comprehend the meaning of the Apostle on this occasion, it is necessary to advert to the particular object he had in view. The Apostle then, it is observed, is here speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which were graciously vouchsafed to the infant church, for the purpose of effecting the more speedy and general propagation of the Christian cause. Among these gifts, that of *praying by the spirit* was confessedly one. But, alas! through the infirmity of human nature, these spiritual gifts, designed for the edification of the church, were not always employed to that purpose. Vanity and ostentation in the exercise of them sometimes took place of better motives. To correct this notorious abuse of Divine grace, and to regulate the exercise of spiritual gifts in such a manner, that they might prove beneficial to the parties for whose sake they were originally granted, was the object the Apostle had in view in writing this part of his epistle.

That attendants upon a Divine ordinance should be benefited by the minister of it, it was absolutely necessary that they should understand what they heard. To this end, he who had the gift of tongues, if he prayed in a tongue unknown to his hearers, is required by the Apostle to interpret at the same time, that his congregation might be benefited as well as himself. "I would," says the Apostle, "that you all spake with tongues; (that you all partook of that miraculous gift whereby you might be enabled to speak languages you had never learned;) but rather that you prophesied; for greater is he that prophesieth, than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may be edified." "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret." And for the following very evident reason: "for," continues the Apostle, "if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful:" not unfruitful to myself, but to my congregation. As if he had said, if I pray in an unknown tongue, without at the same time interpreting my prayer, the spirit within me prayeth, it is true; or I may be said to pray by the spirit; but my meaning being unintelligible must of course be unprofitable to my hearers.

“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, I will pray with the understanding also.” In other words; if therefore I do make use of that gift bestowed upon me, of praying by the spirit, I will make use of it in a manner that I may be understood by my hearers; that they, not less than myself, may be edified by my prayer. That such is the sense in which praying by the spirit is here to be understood, we conclude from what the Apostle has subjoined in the following verses: “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say *Amen* at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest; for thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all; yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

Hence we see, that by *praying by the spirit* is here meant, praying in a language unknown to the congregation; and by *praying with the understanding*, praying in a language with which they are acquainted. And to convince us of the little value the Apostle set upon this gift of praying by the spirit, compared

with the more important consideration of edifying his hearers, he tells us, that he had rather speak five words in the church to be understood, than by his voice he might teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown language, though that language were dictated by the spirit.

But *praying by the spirit*, in the sense in which enthusiasts now understand that phrase, is not one of those extraordinary gifts with which the primitive Christians were furnished, but something very different; for it is rather an acquisition of art, attained by habit and practice, and dependent in a great measure for its success upon the particular genius and abilities of the party, rather than an inspired gift.

Considering it in this light, in which sound sense has ever considered it, we do not hesitate to prefer a settled form to any extemporary exertion of the mental faculties, for the following obvious reasons:

In the first place, certain it is, that so far as the congregation are concerned, the *extemporary* prayer of the minister is to them as much a form as any other. If, then, the congregation must have a form in either case, it remains only to be considered, what form is best calculated for their edification. Upon this head, it is presumed, there can be little dispute. For on

the one hand, we have an excellent form of prayer, composed with great judgment and piety, which the congregation may, and which it is designed they should, make their own, by joining in it; on the other, we have (generally speaking) an imperfect and unconnected form, in which they cannot join, because, on account of its being strange to their ears, they must, in a great degree, be unprepared to accompany it. Without meaning, therefore, to reflect upon the abilities of teachers out of the church, or to impute to all the improprieties of which some have been notoriously guilty; I think it may be said, that the only choice left to the hearers upon this subject, is, whether they will have a *good* form or a *bad* one; a form of sound words, with which they are previously acquainted, on the one hand; or, on the other, a form, upon the propriety of which they cannot at any time depend: experience having proved, that both the words and matter of it are oftentimes ill digested, sometimes indecent, and occasionally unsound.

Taking the subject, then, in this light only, it appears, that, so far at least as the edification of the congregation is concerned, the change that enthusiasm has introduced into the public worship of Christians,

has been much for the worse; and that the Christian, in leaving the established service of the church, has gained nothing to balance against the essential advantages he has lost.

But there is this further consideration attached to an established form of prayer in preference to any other, namely, the promise of favourable attention being paid to it by the DEITY; a consideration which, it is probable, may never have been taken into the account. “If two of you shall agree upon earth, (says our blessed SAVIOUR) as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my FATHER which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” Matt. xviii. 19, 20. On which ORIGEN makes this comment: “This is the cause we are not heard when we pray, in that we agree not in all things. For as in musick there must be harmony and agreement of voices, or else it delights not the hearers; so in the church* an assent

* The unreasonableness of *private* prayer in public will appear, by considering, that all prayers offered up to GOD in public must be publicly known, *consented to*, and *agreed upon*, by all them that join therein. Thus it ever was in the church of CHRIST—the faithful knew what they prayed for. “You that are faithful (says ST. CHRYSOSTOM, Hom. vi. on Tim.) know what things are to be

and agreement is necessary, or else GOD is not pleased, neither will He hear the voice of our prayers." It is to this agreement in prayer, that denominates our public worship of GOD *common-prayer*, that CHRIST hath promised his presence. This promise consequently seems to belong only to the public prayers of the church; which, by being previously composed for general use, become consequently the joint prayers of the congregation; a circumstance which furnishes a powerful argument in favour of that practice, which has ever taken place in the Christian church. Whereas in other assemblies of Christians, where the extemporary prayer of the minister constitutes the substance of religious worship, the condition upon which this promise of our SAVIOUR is suspended, cannot, properly speaking, be performed.

There are, indeed, among separatists from the church, those who, from an unhappy perversity of character, which is continually manifesting itself in a

desired in prayer, because all prayer (that is public) ought to be *common*. It is the exhortation of IGNATIUS, "that we assemble together in one place, and use one prayer *common to all*." Epist. ad Magn. And the establishment of a public form for public prayer, if not an effectual, is at least the best, security that can be devised against false doctrine, because it constitutes that public standard of the church, to which an appeal is at all times to be made.

settled opposition to every thing that is established, carry their objections to settled modes of worship to that extent, as to reject even the LORD's prayer, because it is *a form*. To reason with such persons would, probably, answer no better purpose, than it would have done heretofore to have reasoned with the Scotch covenanters; who, upon the word of command being given in the field to wheel to the right, stood stock still; and upon being questioned, why he did not obey, gave for answer, that his conscience would not permit him, for the word of command was *a form*, and they had taken up arms to fight against *forms*.

It may be proper, however, to say one short word on this head, for the consideration of those, who, whilst they affect to pray by the spirit, reject the LORD's prayer, as laying a restraint upon that Divine impulse, by which they imagine themselves to be governed. For, in conformity with this idea, the Holy Spirit, whom our SAVIOUR sent into the world for the purpose of bringing all things to the remembrance of his disciples which He had said unto them, is supposed to act in opposition to a command which CHRIST, when on earth, had given for their direction: "After this manner (says CHRIST to his dis-

ciples) pray ye; Our FATHER," &c. Matth. vi. 9. A form of prayer, which, from its construction, appears to have been originally designed for the use of a congregation; and which the church, in conformity with our SAVIOUR'S original direction, has always thought proper to make a part of our religious worship. The conclusion in this case is too obvious, it is presumed, to require being drawn at length.

It may, perhaps, be objected by those from whom we differ upon the subject of extemporary prayer, that our reasoning upon it tends in a great measure to deny the assistance of the Holy Spirit. On this head, therefore, we observe briefly, what we are fully persuaded of, that whoever is not assisted by the Holy Spirit in prayer, whatever be the form which he may adopt for the purpose, will never pray to effect. But whilst we admit this position in its proper sense, we at the same time do not hesitate to differ in opinion from enthusiasts, with respect to what is meant by the spirit of prayer. With them it means a spirit of ready invention, and extemporary effusion, which is by no means the certain effect of Divine influence. With us it means, what can proceed from GOD alone, a spirit of devotion and pious affection; such as holy DAVID may be supposed to

have particularly felt, when he composed the 42d, the 51st, the 84th, and 86th Psalms; with some others, which need not be pointed out.

This spirit of devotion, which gave acceptance at the Throne of Grace to the simple prayer of the Publican; and without which the most perfect composition is but a collection of vain words, offensive to the Being to whom it is addressed; is a mixture of humiliation and gratitude, derived from the consideration of our vileness and wretchedness on the one hand, and the contemplation of infinite goodness and astonishing loving-kindness on the other. Whoever prays in this disposition of soul, most certainly prays by the spirit; because this disposition is not *natural*, but the effect of that Divine influence, which is graciously employed for the purpose of bringing fallen man back to his Maker.

This devout disposition, the work of the Holy Spirit, is not, it is true, confined to any particular mode of prayer; but, as it confessedly depends more upon the *heart* than the *head*, it is more likely to prevail on occasions, when, in consequence of the head being less occupied with attention to the form or invention of the matter of prayer, the heart is more at liberty to be affected by the spirit of it.

A consideration, how little effect soever it may produce in the minds of those who, by their separation from our church, are not in a condition to appreciate it, must, it is presumed, make every considerate member of it sensible of the advantages he enjoys in the use of a liturgy; which, from its excellent construction, is not only calculated to raise that spirit of devotion essential to all religious exercises; but which is, moreover, in strict correspondence with the word of GOD, and the platform of primitive practice.

And would those who now separate from us, but give themselves the trouble to know what our church is; we are confident, that their zeal, which now flames against her without knowledge, would be abated, if not totally extinguished. For let any one that is religiously disposed, but do justice to her service, by conforming himself to the several parts of it *in spirit* and *in truth*; and we dare answer for the consequence. But the misfortune is, and we lament it, that none of those out of the church, and few, alas! of those who are in it, will make the experiment. And hence it is, that the former are so violent against her, and the latter so indifferent for her.

Upon the service of *preaching*, little need be remarked; because it is to be considered rather as an

appendage to religious worship, than an actual part of it; and being more the service of the minister, than of the congregation, the manner in which it is performed may, with more latitude, be left to his judgment and discretion. Provided the doctrine delivered be consonant to the revealed word of God, and made intelligible to the hearers, the service of preaching is duly performed; and being calculated to answer its end, all further enquiry about it becomes unnecessary.

But whilst we are unwilling to say any thing that may tend in any degree to depreciate a powerful means of grace, as the service of preaching most undoubtedly is, when properly accompanied, we are nevertheless obliged to speak of it as it is; with the view of preventing a greater effect being expected from it, than it was designed to produce.

The service of preaching was intended to instruct Christian professors in their duty; the service of prayer, to procure for them that Divine assistance which can alone enable them to discharge it. Now if the whole of the public performance of religion be in a manner swallowed up in preaching, it is easy to conceive how the attendants upon it may be *bearers* of the word, and not *doers* of it; possessing a form of

godliness, without knowing any thing of the power of it. For it is as possible for a man to be a diligent attendant upon sermons, and yet manifest nothing of the spirit of Christianity in his life and conversation; as it is impossible for him to be a devout and constant suppliant at the Throne of Grace, and long remain an un sanctified person. For GOD, we are told, will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. But He has nowhere promised, that He will grant it to those whose religious service consists in *hearing* only.

It is a remark that has been long since made, that no man who prays, can long continue a sinner; for either his praying will make him leave off sinning, or his sinning will certainly oblige him to leave off praying. To which we will add, that a man may hear sermons all his life-time, and yet be as far from heaven at the end of his stage as when he set out; but let him pray the prayers of our church, and devoutly attend her sacraments, and we may venture to answer for his salvation, though he should have been so circumstanced, as not to have heard a single sermon during his whole Christian progress.

Should the foregoing ideas be conformable to sound reason, the great danger consequent upon that error of the present age, which has led so many well-mean-

ing people to comprehend all religious service in that of preaching, will become strikingly apparent.

“It is well known,” (says Bishop ANDREWS) that all the time of the primitive church, the sermon was ever done before the service begun; and that to the sermon, heathen men, infidels, and Jews, heretics, schismatics, in short, all sorts of people, were admitted. But when they went to service, when the Liturgy began, all these were voided; not one of them suffered to stay. It were strange, that that should be the only or the chief service of God, whereat they, which were held no servants of God, no part of the church, might and did remain no less freely than they that were.”

Those, therefore, who separate from the church, if they will give themselves liberty to think upon the subject, will be satisfied, that the only part of religious worship, which they have carried away with them, is the *least essential* part of her service. And if they will look into the history of the Christian world, they will be convinced, that in proportion as the religious exercise of Christian professors has consisted in *bearing* more, and *praying less*, the spirit of Christianity has sensibly declined; and that the only hope of restoring it to any thing like its primitive standard must

be derived from the re-adoption of those means, by which it was originally promoted.

We know, and we are sorry to think, that there are many serious persons, who, from an idea that members of our church are mere formal lifeless professors of Christianity, have separated from her communion, with the view of joining in what appears to them a more spiritual service elsewhere. But though we are not disposed to admit the truth of the reason advanced on this occasion, and are inclined to think that separation from the church is to be traced up to a very different motive, yet we do not feel ourselves engaged to enter upon this part of the subject; our present business being to point out the advantages attendant upon communion with the church, not to enlarge upon the occasional ill use that has been made of them.

To form a fair judgment on this head, we must consider what the service of our church is in itself, and the spiritual effect which it is calculated to produce; not the little benefit which its formal attendants have actually derived from it. Viewing things in this light, we do not hesitate to say, that the circumstance of the separatist from our church having his attention so engrossed with the service of preaching, as it

generally is, how excellent soever that preaching may be, throws an additional weight into the scale of disadvantage derivable from his separation. In consequence of which he is obliged to take up, for the most part, with an easy hear-say kind of religious service, which is not calculated to procure for him either pardon or blessing at the Throne of Grace; whilst the member of the church is, or ought to be, engaged in those more severe and more spiritual exercises, which, when properly performed, are the *covenanted* conditions upon which both are to be obtained.

In treating this subject, we have hitherto considered how man is affected by it, in the relation in which he stands to GOD, as redeemed by the blood of his Son; we will now consider for a moment, how it affects him as member of a civilized community.

One of the most general marks by which Christians are to be known, is the love which they bear to each other. “By this,” says CHRIST, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” The religion which Christians profess is founded in love, and best calculated to produce it. Its characteristic fruits are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. So that it may be laid down as an axiom,

that where charity or love of the brethren is wanting, there genuine Christianity is not to be found.

Now it has pleased God in this, as in most other cases, to ordain, that the present and future interests of mankind, their peace in this world, and that in the next, should travel as it were hand in hand together; by making an uniformity in religious worship contribute essentially to both. So long as men continue in unity in the church, they are, generally speaking, disposed to live in unity among themselves. The breaking away from her is but a preparatory step to their breaking away from each other. No sooner is the centre of unity deserted, than the bond of Christian fellowship, by which men, as members of the church, are held together, is burst asunder; and that society, which before constituted a compact body, at peace within itself, is crumbled into parties and factions.

Certain it is, that union among Christians is to be found only within the walls of the church. Upon leaving those walls, that union is exchanged for endless division; which unavoidably generates those evils which the Apostle has described among the works of the flesh; under the several heads of "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, and murders."

So that separation from the church ultimately proves more or less fatal to the peace of individuals; as if it were the design of GOD, that men should experience in this world, the effects of their deviation from his plan for their salvation. For when the passions are set at work in this business, a mistaken zeal for what some men conceive to be the truth, becomes the plausible plea for disallowing to others that liberty, which they have not scrupled to assume to themselves.

This principle, common to all religious differences, constitutes the general ground upon which persecution is built; which, though a word of *partial* application, it being generally confined to the severities which we ourselves feel, not to those which we inflict on others, is that severe scourge with which Providence seems to have permitted men to afflict each other, as a punishment for their mutual desertion of the Christian character. For whilst bigots of all descriptions persuade themselves, that they are instruments in GOD's hand for promoting his cause, they are in fact only acting under the influence of disordered passions, and gratifying the propensities of a corrupt nature.

When the Scotch covenanters, through the unhappy distraction of the times, had succeeded so far as

to break off from all connection with the church in their own country, by setting up a form of government independent of it; their consciences, as they pretended, could not be at rest, whilst a church continued to exist in England; and in their zeal for proselytism, the destruction of a whole kingdom was not, by these intemperate bigots, thought too dear a price to be paid for the propagation of their favourite cause.

The Puritans, in the seventeenth century, who fled from hence for the sake of enjoying a greater degree of religious freedom, than was at that time to be had in this country, were no sooner established in their new settlement, than they furnished the most convincing proof, that those who go the greatest lengths to procure religious freedom for themselves, are least disposed to allow it to others. The persecution which, under the forms of law, these Puritans set on foot against some of their brethren, who ventured, after their example, to think for themselves in religious matters, was so severe, that an order from government was deemed necessary to restrain its violence. In short, this people, who in England could not bear being chastised with rods, had no sooner got free from their fetters, than they scourged their fellow refugees with scorpions; though the absurdity, as

well as the injustice, of such proceeding might have stared them in the face.

These circumstances, humiliating to man, as a reasonable creature, have been brought forward to convince the reader, that separation from the church as generally leads to further disunion among the separatists themselves, as it certainly does to the breach of that charity, by which the Christian religion, when professed in purity, binds all men together.

But, for the consideration of bigots of every description, whether in the church, or out of it, (for the principle upon which they act is equally to be condemned) be it observed, that the honour of God can never be promoted at the expence of *Christian charity*; and he that maketh the glory of God the end, must take the word of God for the rule, of his actions. We are told, indeed, that “it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing;” and we readily subscribe to the doctrine. We are, moreover, exhorted by the Apostle to “contend earnestly for the faith;” and God forbid, that Christians should at any time be otherwise disposed. But whilst we guard against that general indifference in religious matters, which constitutes one of the striking characteristics of the age; we must at the same time re-

member, that Christian zeal, under the direction of that wisdom which descendeth from above, will be “pure and peaceable, full of mercy, and of good fruits;” in contradistinction to that furious and destructive quality, which has at different periods usurped its sacred name, but which bears the unequivocal mark of its disgraceful origin; it being “earthly, sensual, devilish.”

In a word, the zeal of the Christian must not be of a kind with that which the Disciples felt, when they would have called down fire from heaven to destroy the city that was indisposed to receive them; but must resemble, as far as may be, the holy and affectionate zeal of that blessed person, who came into the world, not to *destroy* men’s lives, but to *save* them. And that man knows nothing of the Christian religion, who does not know it to be what it has been here represented; and where what is called by that sacred name, is unaccompanied with the fruits above specified, depend upon it, some poisonous doctrine has been mixed up with it, destructive of its salutary effect; or the professor, how zealous soever he may be, has substituted the creature of his own imagination, for the truth *as it is in CHRIST JESUS*.

“It were well, (says an old writer*) if, instead of wild enthusiasm, we would come to learn the sobriety of religion. In which let us heighten our zeal and Divine enthusiasm, to adhere strictly to the revealed will of scripture; to have a flaming charity for the good of the body, and the unity of the church; that our enthusiasm may tend to heal, and not to divide; to advance the glory of God, and to humble ourselves in our own conceits; that we may be willing cheerfully to submit ourselves to our superiors both in church and state; and not be so apt to judge others, as to censure ourselves: and then, though we had different opinions, yet we should have no schism. We should live together, as members of the same body; that though one were more honourable or useful than another, yet there would be no strife, no emulation, but which should exceed most in mutual good offices, and care for the whole. Such a heaven we should see, if we had no schism.”

But the evils resulting from schism are not confined to men in their private character of Christians, but affect them also in their public one, as members of a civilized state.

* LESLEY.

Schism and rebellion have, in all ages of the world, been intimately connected with each other. The same disposition of mind that leads individuals to make their own church, if uncontroled, leads them also to imagine themselves qualified to form their own government. Hence it is, that schismatics have been at all times, more or less, what they were in ST. JUDE's days, *murmurers* and *complainers*. By such men this kingdom has once been brought to desolation. The ministers of the church were driven from their pulpits by them; that the *godly preachers*, as they were then called, might step into their places. And the fruit of their doctrine, when ripened to perfection, was this: a most pious prince was murdered, because he would not join with them in pulling down that church, which he had *sworn* to support; and the constitution of this country was destroyed, because it was not built upon a plan of their *own forming*.

The same heaven of wickedness, which produced those scenes of misery and confusion in the last century, is, it is to be feared, *now* working in this kingdom; and it will be no breach of charity to say, that the doctrines, which are at times delivered by some of those irregular preachers, with which, unhappily for us, this country so much abounds, tend in a

great degree to spread the mischief. In contempt of former experience, and in defiance of an existing example, the most wretched in its kind that the world ever produced, of the effects attendant upon a general dissolution of order in society; there are not wanting men, who, either from vanity or design, are desirous of making hazardous experiments, under the plausible idea of improving a science, upon which few heads are competent to form a judgment; and to the consequences of a mistaken theory, upon which the very existence of a state may eventually fall a sacrifice.

Reformation, it shall be readily granted, is at all times a desirable thing, when the *honesty* as well as *judgment* of the reforming party are fully to be depended on. But there is a further and very important consideration belonging to this subject, which is seldom taken into account; and against which neither honesty nor judgment are a sufficient security. In politics, the most important events are oftentimes unforeseen, and derived from causes with which they have no immediate or apparent connection. Circumstances in proof of this position are to be met with in the history of every country. A plan set on foot by wise and honest men may be so distorted in its work:

ing, by passing through the hands of men differently disposed, that the evil eventually produced may far overbalance the good originally projected. For the direct and immediate consequences of innovation of any kind are, generally speaking, the least important. Hence it follows, that reformers should be men possessed, not only of sound heads and honest hearts, but also of a considerable degree of forecast, a sort of anticipating knowledge with respect to future events, to enable them to see the *remote* as well as *immediate* effect of the means they set in motion. For no wise man, though sensible of an evil, provided it be not of the *intolerable* kind, will risk a remedy, the operation of which he cannot in some measure ascertain; and the effect of which may, from its violence, leave him in a worse condition than it found him.

With respect to ourselves, possessed of the best government, and the most Apostolic church in the world, we are nevertheless, it must be confessed, a discontented people; owing in part to the hypochondriac feelings of some, who know not what it is to be happy under any circumstances; the designed misrepresentations of others; and the various projected schemes of imaginary reformers, whose zeal seldom permits them to weigh coolly the possible attainment

of speculative perfection, against the probable risk attendant upon the prosecution of it. And perhaps it may be thus accounted for: in proportion as things in this world approach nearer to that perfection best calculated to promote human happiness, there the grand enemy of man, the disturber of his peace, and the envier of his happiness, is always most busily employed. And when this prince of darkness assumes the dress of an angel of light, by making religion the tool with which he works for the accomplishment of his purpose, he is then most to be dreaded, because *then* he can most successfully deceive.

Such are the general consequences resulting from a separation from the church of CHRIST. A more particular investigation of them would lead into a wider field, than is proposed to be entered upon, on this occasion.

Perhaps, indeed, some indulgence may be required on the part of the reader, to excuse the disproportionate length to which the discussion of this subject has already been drawn out. Not without hopes, however, that what has been said, though in a less complete and systematic form than the importance of the subject demanded, may be sufficient to answer the purpose in view, where it meets with a mind

disposed to receive it; we hasten to a conclusion, in one short but necessary word to the professed members of the Christian church.

Whilst we are engaged in an earnest, though humble, endeavour to preserve the unity of the Christian church, by bringing forward every consideration which may tend to prevent a separation from it; it ought, most assuredly, to be a matter of very serious concern with the members of that church, that they do not render abortive our endeavour, by a voluntary ignorance of, or shameful indifference to, a subject, which must be regarded as involving in it their most important interests. To secure themselves against such an imputation, it is necessary that they do justice to the church to which they belong; by making themselves acquainted with the nature of its constitution, the design of its establishment, and the privileges of which they become partakers by their admission into it. This done, they will never forsake its communion; because they will be convinced, that no plan upon which any other Christian society has been formed, is so well calculated to promote the spiritual edification of its members, as that to which they belong. But if they will not seek to make themselves acquainted with this interesting subject, not-

withstanding the abundant means graciously vouchsafed to them for that purpose; if the religion which they profess, instead of being built on the firm ground of sober and rational enquiry, is the mere result of early prejudice, and accidental circumstance; a kind of hereditary possession handed down to them from their forefathers, of which they confessedly know little, and about which, perhaps, they still care less; if, when they come to a place of holy worship, they enter not into the services performed there; neither praying the prayers of the church, nor joining in the sacraments; but when they ought to be on their knees, in humble supplication for pardon and grace, they remain on their seats unconcerned and uninterested in the sacred business that is going forward: the necessary consequence must be, that they will be *dead*, not *living*, members of the church; and it will be no subject for surprize, if, after having continued in that state for years, without experiencing any communication of Divine spirit from the Head to which they *professedly* belong, they should be persuaded to seek unhallowed fire elsewhere.

But be it remembered, the fault in this case is not in the church, but in its members; and by cutting themselves off from the church, upon the imaginary

idea of acquiring that spiritual attainment, of which they are not in actual possession, in consequence either of their abuse or disuse of those appointed means to which the Divine grace has been formally annexed; they only render their case, it is to be feared, in some sense more *hopeless* than it was before. A limb, though diseased, whilst it continue united to the body, may recover; which, when separated from it, must inevitably perish.

CONCLUDING DISCOURSE.

TO convince, is one thing; to prevail with men to act in conformity with that conviction, is another. The former is the general effect of sound argument, addressed to competent understandings; the latter is oftentimes attended with a species of humiliation, to which the pride of man will not suffer him to submit.

It is never too soon to tread back our steps, when convinced that we are not travelling in the right path; because the difficulty of our return to it increases in proportion to our distance from it. But, alas! all men possess not firmness of mind, to enable them to do justice to their reasoning faculty; choosing rather, out of compliment to the opinion of the world, which is rarely worth obtaining, to continue in error, than to take (as they conceive) shame to themselves, by acknowledging that they have been

mistaken; which is in fact, in other words, to say that they are wiser to-day than they were yesterday.

This remark is, perhaps, more frequently exemplified in religious, than in any other concerns in life: for in proportion to the importance of the object in pursuit is, generally speaking, the strength of prejudice in favour of the plan adopted for the purpose. Hence it is, that of the many who separate from the church, very few can ever be persuaded to return to it. You may succeed, if master of the subject, in removing all objections, in answering all arguments, in satisfying all scruples; so that separatists shall in a manner be left speechless: but when you think yourself upon the point of accompanying them to the house of God as friends, there is a lion in the way—the pride of the human heart will not suffer them to proceed. I once remember having a long and interesting conversation with a parishioner, of whose understanding I had formed a favourable judgment, upon the subject of his leaving the church; and was so happy as to succeed in convincing him. When arrived at this desired point, his immediate question was, “what I would have him do in the case?” To which the answer was obvious; that he should immediately return to the place from whence he had

gone astray. The question subjoined to this advice manifested the infirmity of human nature. “But, sir, (continued he) what shall I do with all those, whom I have drawn after me from the church?” ‘Bring them back with you to the church again, as the best amends that can be made for your past error, and the strongest testimony that can be given of your present sincerity;’ was the reply. But, alas! this was a trial too hard for flesh and blood; the man was not proof against the remarks to which he foresaw his conduct must subject him; he therefore continues to this day a member of the Meeting, in spite of his better judgment. This case, it is to be feared, is by no means a singular one. Little hopes, therefore, can be entertained, that in a subject of this kind conversion will often accompany conviction. For when schism once takes possession of the human mind, it bears some resemblance to a cancer in the human body, which spreads its poisonous influence so generally through the system, that the disease seldom terminates but with the life of the patient.

Nevertheless, how desperate soever the case, the physician, while life remain, perseveres in his attempt to cure. Upon this principle, rather than upon any sanguine hope of success, I have thrown

together the foregoing thoughts upon a subject, which to me appears of the utmost importance. My earnest wish in so doing has been, in the first instance, to discharge some part of my duty towards those immediately committed to my care. In the second, to do some little good in a more general way, should God think me worthy to become an instrument of doing good in such a cause.

It is not to be expected that what has been written, should make impression upon those who will not give themselves leave to think differently from what they may have been accustomed to think; for prejudice, generally speaking, turns its back upon reason: but I cannot help indulging a hope, that where it meets with a candid and ingenuous mind, it will not fail of being attended with some effect. The only probable way to succeed in this case seems to be, by putting men upon the proper use of their rational faculties, from a conviction that ignorance is the prolific parent of error.

All men, it is certain, are not qualified to penetrate into the depths of science; nor is it necessary for the general purposes of life, that all men should be either historians, metaphysicians, logicians, or critics. But all men are concerned to know what plan has been

revealed for the promotion of their eternal welfare; and in what manner their conduct must correspond with it, to secure its effect. It is to be supposed, therefore, that an all-gracious GOD has furnished all men with an understanding competent to this purpose, provided it be properly employed. To that understanding the appeal is here made. For the cause we have in hand, requires not that we should put out the eyes of men, in order to lead them blindfold in their Christian journey. On the contrary, we are desirous that they should see for themselves, and see clearly; upon the idea, that the more they see, the less prejudice they will entertain, and the more they will be satisfied with the direction of their appointed guides.

With this view the Bible is put into their hands; and they are required, after the example of the Bereans, to search and examine, whether what has been said upon the subject of the church be agreeable to the tenour of the Apostolic writings. For that is the standard to which all opinions upon this subject must be ultimately referred.

From these writings, principally, we have collected what appears to us decisive evidence respecting the nature, design, and constitution, of the Christian

church. Upon the authority of these writings, we have described the church to be, not a creature of the imagination, or a society of human establishment; but a visible body of people called out of the world by GOD, and placed by Him under a particular form of government and discipline, calculated to promote the great object for which they are brought together. By direct evidence from the same fountain of knowledge, we have maintained, that the Head of the church originally committed the care of it to his Apostles, investing them with power to manage the concerns of it; and that the Apostles did actually exercise that power, by appointing divers orders in the church, and establishing the plan upon which it was in future to be conducted. In correspondence with this arrangement, we have represented the unity of the church to consist in the conformity of its members to this Divine plan; whereby they become joined together in that brotherly communion and fellowship, necessary to the promotion of that charity, which is "the bond of perfectness," and the characteristic mark of the disciples of the blessed JESUS.

It now remains that the reader examine this matter for himself. With his Bible in his hand, and prejudice laid aside, let the subject then be brought to

an impartial hearing. And if he find, as we are persuaded will be the case, that those parts of the sacred records, to which an appeal has been made in the foregoing discourses, will not, upon fair construction, admit a sense different from what has been annexed to them; if he would maintain the character of an honest man, he will be led to the following obvious conclusion: that a fancied independence on spiritual authority, upon the mistaken idea, that every man is at liberty to make his own church; or to join himself to any society of Christians who may assume that name, with the view of offering up a more spiritual service than, in their judgment, is offered to GOD in any other way, the plausible ground upon which all modern separations from the church are built; whilst it renders the Apostolic writings destitute of all force and meaning, tends at the same time to the dissolution of that order, which CHRIST, for wise reasons, saw necessary to be established.

In handling this subject, we have laid down two general positions; which, it is presumed, are not to be controverted. The first is, that the Author of man's salvation was best qualified to determine the plan calculated to carry it into effect. The second, that as the salvation of fallen man is the work of

free and undeserved grace, man must be thankful to accept it on the conditions upon which it is offered. The conclusion to which these positions lead, seems to be this: that no man, in the *ordinary way* of salvation, can hope to attain the end of his Christian calling, who neglects to use the means appointed by God to lead him to it.

Such is the ground upon which the argument for conformity to the church is built. The consideration that a certain plan has been set on foot, and certain means of grace appointed by the Head of the church, for the purpose of securing the salvation of its members, tends to render that argument conclusive. For, as it has been already observed, though perhaps in different words, the spiritual life of man must depend upon his spiritual connection with CHRIST. "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine." But the only *revealed* way that CHRIST has appointed for man's obtaining this spiritual connection with him, is by becoming a member of his body, the church. "By one spirit (says the Apostle) we are all baptized into one body;" by one and the same spirit, communicated to us at baptism, we are united into one spiritual society, the church; and "have been all made to drink into one spirit:" our

spiritual life, as members of CHRIST's body, being preserved to us by our communication with the head of it, JESUS CHRIST; in the use of those means of grace appointed by Him for that purpose; upon the principle laid down by our SAVIOUR himself in this short though comprehensive axiom, "that without Him we can do nothing."

Hence we have been led to point out the apparent danger of separating from the unity of the church. For, if we reason from analogy, as, from the figure under which ST. PAUL has described the church, we are obviously led to do, we shall reason thus: that by separating from the body of which CHRIST is the head, we separate from that spirit which animates it. And if we become partakers of CHRIST's spirit, in consequence of being admitted members of his church, which the scripture has given us to understand, (Acts ii. 38) the continuance of that spirit with us must, it should seem, depend upon our remaining in that connection with Him, which first qualified us for its reception.

We read but of *one* body and *one* spirit, Ephes. iv. 4. From whence we are led to conclude, that the spirit of CHRIST is confined to that body of which he is the head; and that body is the church. A

separation from the church consequently, according to the meaning designed to be conveyed by the Apostle, must be regarded as a kind of spiritual death.

From what has been said at large upon this subject, our object has been to enable the reader to understand the figurative language of the Apostle, considered as descriptive of the mystical body of CHRIST; the members of which are joined together, and animated by the same spirit, derived to them from their participation in those life-giving sacraments, which CHRIST appointed as the means of forming and preserving to himself a church upon earth. The Apostolic language thus interpreted furnishes a clear and distinct notion of the Christian church in its original and perfect form; of which the joint communion of its component members constitutes an essential characteristic. If we have been tediously particular on this point, it has been from a conviction, that a want of proper information upon it has been the cause of many well-meaning people going out of the church, who might otherwise have gladly remained in it. For their sakes, therefore, I still feel disposed to say some few words on a subject, which, from its connection with that in which we are immediately engaged, seems to claim some attention.

Separation from the church originates, it is to be feared, for the most part, in pride; although it is, generally speaking, attempted to be justified by the imaginary plea of superior advantage, derivable from an attendance upon religious worship in some other place. Should I be thought wanting in charity in this case, I must take shelter, under the authority of a most judicious writer of the last century,* whose remark upon this subject possesses that sterling value, which must give it currency in every age. “What harm soever” (says he) “in private families there groweth, by disobedience of children, stubbornness in servants, untractableness in them who, although they otherwise may rule, yet should, in consideration of the imparity of their sex, be also subject; whatsoever by strife among men combined in greater societies, by tyranny of potentates, ambition of nobles, rebellion of subjects in civil states; by heresies, schisms, and divisions in the church; naming *pride*, we name the mother that brought them forth, and the only nurse that feedeth them. Give me the hearts of all men humbled, and what is there that can overthrow or disturb the peace of the world, where many things are the cause of much evil, but *pride* of all?” With-

* HOOKER'S Sermon on Pride.

out, however, particularly insisting on the cause of separation from the church, (as we would always, ignorant as we are of the human heart, speak with diffidence, when we argue from the appearance of an external act, to the existence of an internal principle;) it will be more to our purpose to attend to the consequences derivable from it. And under this head, we cannot help remarking the unsound ground, upon which a prevailing idea respecting the Divine assistance is commonly built.

In the church, we look for the *ordinary* assistance of the Holy Spirit in the regular and sincere use of the means of grace appointed to convey it. The Divine promise encourages us so to do. Provided, therefore, we do not deceive ourselves in this matter, we certainly shall not be disappointed in our expectation. Separatists from the church, are frequently taught to expect the *extraordinary* assistance of the same Divine spirit, independent of all appointed means whatever. For the support of this expectation there is no authority, either from scripture or reason, to be produced. We are not surprised, therefore, that to minds engrossed with such an idea, all stated services of religion should appear in the light of useless forms, and beggarly elements; beneath the attention

of those who are favoured with a more immediate communication from the Divine Fountain. But to prove the absurdity of this idea, considered as establishing the ground for a general position, and at the same time to set aside all pretensions to such extraordinary assistance, it requires only to be remarked, for what purpose that assistance was originally granted, and to what end it was employed.

“ I will pray the Father,” said CHRIST to his disciples, a little before his departure from them, as we read in ST. JOHN’S Gospel, “ and he shall send you another *comforter*,* that he may abide with you for ever, even the spirit of truth.” In another part of his writings the same Apostle tells us, that “ if we sin, we have an *advocate* with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous.” From the Apostle’s application of the same word to the Holy Ghost in the former text, which he has applied to our SAVIOUR in the latter; and since the word thus applied to our SAVIOUR must be translated as it is, to make good the Apostle’s meaning upon the occasion, it is to be concluded, that by this common use of the same term, the Apostle intended thereby to convey an idea of

* The original word, translated *Comforter* and *Advocate*, in these two different parts of ST. JOHN’S writings, is the same.

some similitude existing between the office of the respective parties; consequently, that both these Divine persons were, in some sense, to be considered *advocates* for mankind.

Now the office of an *advocate* is, to support or defend a cause; to appear in behalf of another, to plead for him, or manage his concerns. Whilst, therefore, we have an *advocate*, JESUS CHRIST the righteous, who appears in our cause before the Father in Heaven; we have also *another advocate* on earth, who undertakes the cause of the church against its spiritual enemies; providing the members of it, from time to time, with such assistance, as may enable them to carry on their warfare against them with success. To the care and management of this powerful advocate, our blessed SAVIOUR, when he left the world, committed his church; that he might continue with it, as its patron and support, to the end of time. The method adopted by this Divine Advocate, in the management of his great concern, at the commencement of his office, is, what is now meant to be pointed out to immediate attention.

At the first establishment of the Christian church, a great and important reformation, both in principles and practices, was to be effected. The cause of

JESUS CHRIST was to be justified; the prince of this world was to be judged; the idols of heathenish superstition was to be thrown down; and the religion of a crucified SAVIOUR propagated. The instruments pitched upon by Divine wisdom for carrying this great work into effect, were men, for the most part, of the lowest order and meanest endowments; and consequently men, humanly speaking, the least qualified for the undertaking; especially when it is considered, that, on the other side all the powers of earth and hell were combined against them.

These extraordinary circumstances, under which the church of CHRIST first appeared in the world, required *extraordinary* assistance from heaven, for the support of a cause in itself so apparently weak. To furnish this assistance, by distributing those gifts which JESUS CHRIST, when he ascended up on high, had received for men, Ps. lxviii. 18, was the peculiar office of the Holy Ghost. The manner in which that office was discharged, according to the exigence of the occasion, the Apostle has particularly described in the twelfth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians; where he gives a detail of the several gifts and powers, which were conferred on the first Christians, to give weight and credibility to their

doctrine, and to support an infant, struggling cause against that opposition which was then so powerfully exerted against it. Among these gifts we find that of divers tongues; a gift absolutely necessary, to supply the defects of an incompetent education, and to qualify illiterate men for the immediate discharge of an office, which, according to the commission delivered to them, was “to go and make disciples in all nations.”

But the Apostles were not only to preach and propagate the religion of a crucified JESUS, but were, moreover, to leave behind them a standing revelation for the future direction and government of the church. To enable them to collect the materials for this work, from the detached conversation of their blessed Master, and the incidental circumstances of his life, with a correctness essential to its perfection, *extraordinary* assistance was deemed necessary. One part, therefore, of the Holy Ghost's office, as *advocate* for the church, was to qualify the Apostles for this undertaking; by “leading them into all truth; and bringing all things to their remembrance which JESUS had said unto them.” John xiv. 25, 26. By this *supernatural* assistance, ignorance and error were effectually guarded against; and every truth expe-

dient to be known was delivered to the world, with that authority and conviction, proper to accompany a revelation, designed to be the standard of Christian faith to all future ages.

To those, therefore, who in these days despise the ordinary means of attaining divine knowledge, from a dependence upon that *extraordinary* assistance from the Holy Spirit, which was vouchsafed to the Apostles and first Christians, we have to observe; that the state of the Christian world does not at this time render such assistance necessary. The standard of Christian faith being fixed, we have no new revelation to expect. It remains only, that we now make ourselves acquainted with that which has been vouchsafed unto us; and this is to be done by the usual methods of study and application, accompanied with that ordinary assistance of the Holy Spirit, which we are taught to believe will accompany all sincere endeavours exerted in such a cause.

The church stands no longer upon that ground on which it originally stood, when the weak things of the world and the foolish things were chosen to confound the wise. Kings and Queens are now become her nursing fathers and nursing mothers; and the wisdom of the wise is now engaged in her cause.

The signs and wonders, which accompanied the preaching of the Gospel in its early days, have therefore ceased; because the end for which they were granted having been answered, the continuance of them is no longer necessary. For a similar reason, all the *extraordinary* assistance of the Holy Spirit to qualify the first teachers of Christianity for their office, by the effect of immediate inspiration supplying natural incapacity, has long since ceased; because men have it now in their power, in a great degree, to qualify themselves for the discharge of the ministerial office by a proper employment of those faculties which God has given them for the purpose.

As much important work was to be completed within a short period, the whole world being to be converted by the Apostles and their immediate deputies to the knowledge of the true God, such means were necessary as would tend to give a ready reception to their preaching, by producing a powerful and instantaneous effect upon their hearers. Miracles were expressly calculated for this purpose. And had the state of the church still continued to be what it was when the Holy Ghost first undertook the charge of it, the same *extraordinary* means would still have been necessary for its support. But in propor-

tion as the *ordinary* means of promoting Christian knowledge increased upon the world, *extraordinary* means were withdrawn; and the external evidence for the credibility of the Gospel, from the signs and wonders which attended its early promulgation, gradually gave way to that internal evidence, which the study of the sacred writings, when put into the hands of Christians, was calculated to furnish; an evidence which, though less quick in its operation than what acts upon the understanding through the medium of the senses, has yet this advantage in its favour, that it is more permanent in its effect.

Whilst, therefore, the sober Christian looks for that assistance of the Holy Spirit which is still necessary for his condition, to enable him to “fight the good fight of faith,” and which he certainly will obtain, provided he do not ask amiss; he does not expect to receive assistance which the circumstances of his case do not require.

Should extraordinary events take place in the Christian world, he rests assured, from the experience of former times, that the same Holy Spirit who “divideth to every man severally as he will,” and to whose trust the spiritual concerns of Christians have been committed, will not be wanting to the occasion.

A distinction is, therefore, to be made between the *ordinary* and *extraordinary* assistance of the Holy Spirit; each being adapted by Divine wisdom to the particular condition of the party concerned. In the present day, the extraordinary assistance which attended the infant church is not expected, because it is not wanted. That it is not granted, can be no subject for controversy; whilst those who pretend to it, are unable to produce a proof of it. They neither work miracles, nor do they possess the gift of tongues; though from a want of knowledge of the languages in which the Scriptures were originally written, they are frequently leading their hearers into error; which certainly they would not be permitted to do, if, like the Apostles, they were, as they pretend to be, under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit.

All pretence, therefore, to this *extraordinary* assistance of the Holy Spirit, which tends to supersede the use of those general methods of attaining Divine knowledge, which are suited to the present state of things in the world, and calculated to establish the faith and practice of the Christian professor on the firm ground of sound argument and rational conviction, is the offspring of enthusiasm; which has been productive of more disgrace to the Christian cause,

and more mischief to mankind, than almost any principle that has ever actuated the human mind. And it is from a want of a proper distinction having been made between the effects of the Holy Spirit, which were peculiar to the Apostolic age, and those which a change of circumstances render still necessary to be continued in the church, that all the mistakes upon this subject have arisen.

A consideration, which speaks a language sufficiently intelligible to every discriminating mind, in favour of that rational and edifying form of worship established in our church, as best calculated to form that temper of sober piety and solid virtue, which never fails to produce correspondent effects upon the practice of all who sincerely use it. Especially when it is observed, as in truth and justice it ought to be, that most of the errors which have crept into the church are to be traced up to the ignorance and incapacity of those, who from time to time have deemed themselves qualified to be interpreters of holy writ.

In proof of the foregoing position, it may be sufficient for our present purpose to produce one instance. The original commission delivered to the Apostles, as it stands recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, runs thus: " Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," &c. From the letter of this commission, as it stands in our translation, a conclusion has been drawn by some, that a previous acquaintance with the principles of Christianity is a necessary qualification for admission into the Christian church; and that infants, in consequence of their incapacity to learn, are of course excluded from that privilege. But had the early patrons of this erroneous opinion in this country been acquainted with the original* language, in which this Apostolic commission was first delivered to the world, they would have been satisfied, that a conclusion, the very opposite to the one drawn by them, is what the passage in question seems designed to point out. In proof of this position, it is to be observed, that the words *teach* and *teaching*, which occur in this remarkable passage, are in the *original* Greek expressed by two words, conveying two different meanings. In conformity with which, the commission in question

* The Gospel according to St. Matthew was originally written by him in Hebrew, for the benefit of the Jews at Jerusalem; but afterwards translated by him, or some apostolical person, into Greek, and in that language received into the canon of the New Testament by the whole primitive church.

may with propriety be read thus : “ Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, &c.; and when admitted into the church by baptism, teach them to observe all things,” &c. Children, therefore, are admitted into a state of discipleship in the church, or school, of CHRIST, upon the same idea that they are admitted into that state in any other school; not because they have been already taught, but in order that they may learn. In confirmation of the foregoing remark, it may be observed, that in the Eastern churches, where the Gospel of St. MATTHEW was read in the *Greek* language, the erroneous opinion here alluded to, respecting the incapacity of infants for admission into the church by baptism, never prevailed.

Another text which has been pressed into the same service, by the patrons of this erroneous opinion, will also be found unequal to the weight that has been attempted to be laid upon it. “ Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John iii. 5. But in the original it is, “ except a *person, any one* be born,” &c. a term of general import, and applicable, consequently, to all ages and persons, to *man, woman, and child*. I have thought it necessary to point out

these two passages of scripture to notice, with the view of shewing the reader the narrow ground upon which the objection to infant baptism originally stood. The arguments since drawn from some other circumstances recorded in holy writ in support of it, have been brought forward to prop up a feeble cause, which its zealous advocates having once espoused have thought themselves obliged, at all events, to maintain. Whilst, on the other side, is to be placed that momentous consideration respecting the religious education of children, which reason, experience, and scripture, uniformly recommend to parental attention.

Reason tells us, that if a plant be disposed in its infant state to take an untoward growth, early training is the only mode calculated to correct the natural tendency. What this plant is in the *physical*, man is in the *moral* world; a being who, from the corruption of his nature, is disposed to evil. Vicious affections, like noxious weeds, are the natural produce of the human soil; which will of course ripen into maturity, if early pains be not taken to eradicate them, and plant in their room those graces of the Christian temper, which as they are exotics in the soil of the human heart, require, in order to their being preserved in health and vigour, early nursing, constant

superintendence, and assiduous care. The royal instructor, therefore, in his directions to "train up a child in the way that he should go," spake the language of sound wisdom; of a man acquainted with the actual state of human nature, and solicitous of providing the only remedy, under God, against its prevailing corruption.

The experience of mankind informs us, that the welfare, we might say the existence, of civilized society, in a great measure depends upon the proper discharge of the parental duty. And with respect to religious education in particular, the Jewish historian informs us, that there were never less among the Jews than four hundred houses of catechizing, where the law and the Talmud were regularly expounded: and, moreover, that there was an act made at Jerusalem, which obliged all children of a certain age to attend, in conformity with that positive injunction which accompanied the delivery of the law, and is thus recorded for our admonition: "The words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."*

It seems almost unnecessary to add, that the contrary practice which prevails with many parents, in consequence of their having taken up an erroneous opinion respecting infant baptism, of leaving their children as it were to their own training, in expectation of an extraordinary call from the Spirit, when their day of conversion shall arrive; has been the most ruinous to the Christian cause, and the most advantageous to that of its grand enemy, that ever could proceed from the human mind. A practice, which, were it to become general, would prove the most effectual mean, not only of banishing Christianity from the world, but of reducing the inhabitants of it to a wild state of nature, that could possibly be devised. A consideration, which must powerfully enforce itself upon the mind of every parent, who regards the welfare of his own children; who has formed any idea of his own duty; who has remarked, what his Bible teaches him to do, the great attention that was paid to children under the Jewish dispensation; and has, for a moment, considered, that one of the reasons given by God himself for the particular favour with which He was pleased to distinguish ABRAHAM, is thus expressed, Gen. xviii. "For I know

him," says God, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD."

There is one point more, upon which it may be proper to add a short word, by way of obviating an objection very commonly made against the service of our church, by those who are either unpossessed of candour or discrimination.

When the church of England first emancipated herself from the shackles of the Romish worship, it was not to be wondered at, that some Protestants, with more zeal than judgment, should entertain a jealousy of forms and ceremonies, as tending to preserve the vestiges of that idolatry which they had wisely renounced. But had they considered, that the divines, who scrupled not to use those forms and ceremonies, which were judged expedient to be retained in our church, were some of the most powerful advocates the Protestant cause ever had, they would in candour have concluded, that the objection to forms and ceremonies must chiefly depend upon the idea with which they are accompanied in the mind of the party engaged in them; and that, consequently, they may be not only very innocent, but very advantageous assistances to religious worship.

Forms, considered merely in themselves, are but the outside of religion; and if they lead to nothing beyond that, it matters not in what place they are practised, or by whom. Thus far all rational men readily agree. Their disagreement consists in this: some men reject forms, from a remembrance of their past abuse; whilst others more wisely determine, that the advantage they are calculated to produce, ought not to be sacrificed to the evil which, through the corruption of human nature, may occasionally be derived from them. And this determination is certainly best suited to the state of the party concerned.

Man is a being compounded of soul and body; his religion, therefore, must be suited to his circumstances. That must also have a soul and body, a spiritual and a corporal part; upon the proper union of which two parts, the spiritual life of its professor will, upon experience, be found to depend. For certain it is, that religion may be too refined for the present gross state of the human understanding; which must receive much of its information on divine subjects through a sensible medium. Hence the language of the Bible is, for the most part, a language of *similitudes*; the eye of sense being made to minister to the eye of the understanding; natural and visible

Objects being employed to convey to the mind those ideas, which it is not in a condition to receive in any other way.

Correspondent with this figurative language of Scripture, are the forms or figurative services which have been introduced into religious worship. They are designed to minister to a similar purpose; namely, to inform the understanding, and, at the same time, to awaken and keep alive the attention to those spiritual subjects, which might otherwise make little or no impression. Taken in this light, they may be considered as a sort of explanatory appendages to religious worship; and if made that use of for which they were appointed, must, in a great degree, tend to the spiritual advantage of the parties engaged in them.

On this account they have made a part of every religion, true as well as false, that has appeared in the world. The Jewish religion, that peculiar dispensation of God, abounded with them; from which our SAVIOUR selected those which were adapted to the Christian institution. From whence the conclusion is, that forms have always been deemed necessary to the support of religion in every age.

Abuses there have been, and always will be, in a business in which man is concerned. The Jew, in our SAVIOUR's day, was a scrupulous observer of forms, whilst he knew nothing of the spirit to which they were designed to lead. "He washed diligently the outside of the platter," whilst the inside was suffered to remain unclean.

The Roman Catholic, who regulates his religious service by his bead-roll, is in a somewhat similar condition. And so is every member of our communion, who substitutes the *form* of godliness for the *power* of it.

The object of true religion has been at all times the same; namely, to make man a spiritual being. So far as forms contribute to this purpose, and from their impression upon the mind they contribute greatly to it, they are an essential part of religion.

But there are two extremes in this case, between which the line of the wise man's conduct will be carefully drawn; from a conviction, that the abuse and neglect of forms tend nearly in an equal degree to defeat the desired purpose; the one leading as certainly to superstition and hypocrisy, as the other does to irreligion and prophaneness. A consideration, which, it may be hoped, will give additional weight

to what has been said in a former discourse upon the advantages attendant upon communion with our church; the forms of which are neither so multiplied as to engross the attention, nor yet so insignificant as not to convey a sufficiently instructive meaning to the mind, of the worshipper. Indeed, if any church has been so judicious, as to keep the golden mean between loading the service of God with external forms on the one hand, and stripping it so bare on the other, as not to leave sufficient for the purposes of bodily worship and mental contemplation, the Church of England may justly lay claim to this distinction. And he who persuades himself that religion is to be preserved in the world without forms, makes himself wiser than God; at the same time that he manifests his ignorance of the nature and character of man.

The general view of the subject, which has been here laid before the reader, is designed to lead him to the consideration of his own particular case.

The established church of this kingdom is a branch of the church of CHRIST. The congregation to which some Christians are joined, is a manifest separation from it. The teachers to whose care they have committed themselves, own no relation to that spiri-

tual society, to which all Christians ought to be united. To make use, then, of the language of the primitive church, here is altar set up against altar, and pastor against pastor. From whence it follows, that if there ever were such a sin as that of *schism*, in any age of the Christian church, it is now to be found among us. It behoves those, therefore, whom it may concern, to take this subject into serious consideration. Should our church require any terms of communion with which they are persuaded they ought not to comply, so long as that persuasion lasts, their separation from the church ought to continue. But it must be remembered at the same time, that their persuasion in this case will be their justification in the sight of God, in proportion only as it has been built upon *rational* and *conscientious* conviction. Should it have been taken up with passion or prejudice, or adopted without examination; and should any means of information have been neglected, which might have been made use of for the direction of their judgment, their error in this case will be their sin, because it has been derived from their neglect; and their consequent separation from the church will be also a sin; for one sin will not be permitted to be pleaded in excuse for another.

Let me intreat such Christians, then; to examine fairly the ground upon which their separation stands. Let the objections which they have to communion with our church be brought to a fair trial; laying aside every prejudice, not being too wise in their own conceits, but advising with those who are better qualified to judge than themselves, and from whom they have a right to expect light and direction: remembering, that the Christian ministry was instituted for the very purpose of preventing Christians “ being carried to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; and that professing the faith in the unity of the spirit, and in the bond of peace, they might be edified in truth and love.”

Having thus brought to recollection the principal design of the foregoing Discourses; which was to furnish that uniform and consistent notion of the nature, design, and constitution, of the Christian church, which might qualify the reader to judge of the consequences attendant upon a wilful separation from it, I hasten to a conclusion; craving time only to press that part of the subject upon his mind, which it was one object of the establishment of CHRIST’S church upon earth to promote; namely, that whilst men with one mind

and one mouth glorified God, their communication with each other in the same acts of religious worship, might form a bond of Christian fellowship, effectual for the security of peace and good-will among themselves.

It was a remark long since made by a learned writer, that the same fate (if the expression may be admitted) has attended the Christian, which of old attended the Jewish, religion. The great commandment, which constituted the foundation and principal characteristic of the Jewish religion was, that the Israelites should worship the LORD their God, and that to Him only their service should be dedicated. But, alas! this was the commandment which they were most disposed to break; idolatry being that prevailing sin of the Jewish people, to reclaim them from which all the methods of Divine Providence proved for a long time ineffectual.

Charity, or a disposition to peace and unity, is the second great commandment of the Gospel, and a principal characteristic of the Christian religion. "By this shall all men know," says CHRIST, "that ye are *my disciples*, if ye have love one to another." But of all the commandments obligatory upon the Christian professor, this, perhaps, is the one to which least attention has been paid. Indeed, through the num-

berless divisions which have unhappily taken place among Christians, and that alienation of mind from each other consequent thereupon, it is a commandment which seems almost entirely to have lost its force. Hence it has happened, that Christians, so called, have too frequently borne no resemblance to that amiable character, by which, in conformity with the Gospel standard of perfection, they ought to be distinguished.

The first and great design of Christianity was to reconcile man to God; the second, to reconcile men to each other.

If then we are right in our principle, that one object which the Friend of fallen man had in view in the establishment of his church upon earth was, to promote peace and good-will, by engaging the members of it in the uniform and social pursuit of the same interesting concern; we shall not be wrong in our conclusion, that the cause which has produced an effect so contrary to this benevolent object, must proceed from the very opposite quarter; and that the grand enemy of man, consequently, is the parent of division. "The greatness of God," as a sound writer* of our church has well expressed himself, "is measured by his goodness; his power is exercised in communicating

light and comfort. He openeth his hand, and the whole creation partakes of his bounty. Being perfect in love and beneficence, He is therefore perfect in greatness. But look on the other hand, and you will find that mischief distinguishes the power of SATAN: his greatness consists wholly in crossing the merciful plan of redemption, and counteracting the Divine benevolence; the propagation of discord and disorder is necessary to the keeping up of his grandeur, and to the increase of his kingdom."

This consideration accounts for the frequent and urgent exhortations to peace and unity, to be met with in the sacred writings; as constituting a grand hinge, upon which the success of the Christian scheme must, in a great measure, be expected to turn. Upon this idea the God of Christians is represented as a God of peace and love, and his example set forth as a pattern for man's imitation. "Beloved," says the Apostle, "if God so loved us, in sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him, we ought also to love one another. And hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us;" in other words, "that we are Christians, because He hath given us of his spirit." 1 John iv. 11, &c.

Upon the same idea, the kingdom of CHRIST, which is his church, is described to be "righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost."

To qualify men for a state of membership in this spiritual kingdom, they are required to "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Rom. xiv. 19. "As much as lieth in them to live peaceably with all men." Rom. xii. 18. "To be of one mind, to live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with them." 2 Cor. xiii. 11. "Finally, my brethren," says the Apostle, in prosecution of the same Divine idea, "if there be any consolation in CHRIST, any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy; that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." Phil. ii. 1, &c. And as "there is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing each other in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."*

* Ephes. iv. 2.

From hence it appears, that the religion of CHRIST is a religion of *sensibilities*, no less than of *motives*. It teaches us, after the example of that blessed Person who felt for all men, to take a lively interest in the concerns of our fellow-creatures; to rejoice with them in prosperity, and sympathize with them in distress; and treading in the steps of Him who went about continually doing good, to abound in the labours of Christian benevolence; in the words of the Apostle, “to be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; to be tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST’s sake hath forgiven us.” Rom. xii. 10. The foregoing picture of Christianity, though but partially drawn, furnishes a powerful argument in favour of that plan, which places man in a condition best calculated to promote this great object of his Christian profession.

Upon the supposition, then, that there was no Divine institution in this case, which claimed obedience on the part of man; and the mode of religious worship, as a matter of perfect indifference, was left to the arbitrary discretion of every individual engaged in it; the plan which GOD has graciously marked out for men, by incorporating them into one body or society under regular government,

in consequence of which they became necessarily joined together by that similarity of condition and interest, and that use of the same appointed means for the promotion of their general concern, which must, from the constitution of human nature, be productive of mutual regard and mutual assistance; would be the plan, which, if proposed to him by his fellow-creatures, every thinking Christian, it might be supposed, would readily adopt.

Let not, then, this plan of *social religion* be neglected, or thought lightly of, because it has been projected by that all-wise Being, who, from knowing what was in man, not only knew how best to provide for the circumstances of the party for whose service it was established, but who, from the relation in which man stands to Him, has a right to exact his obedience to it. Rather let us with gratitude avail ourselves of that assistance, which the establishment of the church upon earth ministers to our condition; and not sacrifice that good, which it is so well calculated to produce, to vain dreams of more spiritual perfection, in ways of our own devising.

“ The first blessing that I daily beg of my God for his church (said that pious and affectionate bishop,* whose character the Christian is only at a

loss whether most to love or admire) is, our SAVIOUR's legacy, *peace*; that sweet peace, which in the very name of it comprehends all happiness both of estate and disposition. Other graces are for the beauty of the church; *this* for the health and life of it. No marvel then, if the church, labouring here below, make it her daily suit to her glorious bridegroom in heaven: "Give peace in our time, O LORD." And would to GOD, that the united voice of Christians, of every denomination, might be heard joining in the charitable petition, "Give peace in our time, O LORD; that peace which passeth all understanding."

But division, we all know, cannot lead to unity and peace. Division, therefore, must in its nature be hostile to one great object of the Christian religion. As such, it must be scrupulously avoided by every man, who would co-operate with GOD in the restoration of his fallen nature.

It is the employment of the Christian's life to be gradually changed into the image of his Divine Master; that "the same mind," so far as human infirmity will permit, "may be in him, which was in CHRIST JESUS: and the hope which he entertains, will be always proportionate to the degree of

resemblance, which is to be traced between him and his Divine pattern.

When Christians, therefore, regard the Church as their common mother, and themselves as brethren, travelling in fellowship through the wilderness of this world to their promised land; they will not, by petty disputes on the road, expose themselves to the attacks of their surrounding enemies: but, the grand object in view swallowing up every other consideration, all differences of opinion will give way to the cultivation of that temper, necessary to qualify them for the enjoyment of the blessed country towards which their course is directed.

In such case, the golden age of the primitive church would return upon us; and the proverb, descriptive of the amiable character of its early members, “see how these Christians love one another,” would again be realized. Such an event, rather to be wished for in these days than expected, would bring in the accomplishment of the glorious promises, which in the spirit of prophecy have been made to the church—“when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them:” when

“Ephraim shall no longer envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim;” and there shall be no more consuming or devouring in all GOD’s holy mountain.

O thou Prince of Peace, and Friend of fallen man! who purchased the church with thine own blood; heal the breaches of it, we beseech thee, by the communication of thy grace to all its members; prepare them for that more perfect state of thy kingdom, to which they are taught to look forward; by giving them an heart capable of receiving all those impressions, which thy religion was designed to make upon it, that those who hold fast the faith of thy Gospel, may also possess the spirit of it: to this end, fix in the mind of every Christian professor this important truth, that charity, or a disposition to peace and unity, is that bond of perfectness, without which no man, be his other pretensions what they may, can be qualified for admission into that holy place, from whence discord and division will be for ever excluded, and where nothing will be heard, but the grateful sounds of harmony and love. Even so, blessed JESUS, for thy church’s sake. Amen.

POSTSCRIPT;

To those Members of the CHURCH, who occasionally frequent other Places of Public Worship.

OCCASIONAL Separation from the church stands, in point of argument, on the same ground with *occasional conformity* to it. If conformity to the church be a sin against the conscience of the party, which was the plea originally set up by those who separated from it in this country, every act of occasional conformity, being a commission of that sin, must be subject to condemnation.

If *schism*, or a wilful separation from the church, be in itself a sin, as from the authority of scripture and the primitive writers of the church it is adjudged to be; every occasional separation from it must be seen in a similar point of view. It is a commission of an acknowledged sin; and the only difference between

the *constant* separatist and the *occasional* one appears to be, that the one continues in the habitual practice of that sin, which the other occasionally commits.

Now the sin of schism consists, as we have already observed, in a wilful and needless separation from the communion of the church. And the church, as we understand the term, is that body or regular society of Christians assembled together under the form of government which has been established by its Divine Founder. What that government is, having been already shewn, it need only be here observed, that for fifteen hundred years, the Christian world knew no difference of opinion on this subject.

To get clear of the sin of schism, then, we must deny the existence of the church, considered as an established society under its regular and appropriate government; and in contradiction to the original and established usage of the term, apply it in a vague and indiscriminate sense to all assemblies of Christians, of what denomination or persuasion soever.

This *latudinarian* mode of settling the point, by making the church of CHRIST comprehensive of all the different sects, into which the Christian world has been divided, does certainly make it a matter of indifference, with what particular assembly of Christians

a man is connected. For, upon this principle, he may attend the service of the church in the morning, and that of the meeting-house in the afternoon, and still preserve a consistency of character; because, in in this case, he equally holds communion with the church in one place as in the other. But this idea being in direct contradiction to the letter of scripture, and subversive of one great end which CHRIST had in view in the establishment of his church, which was that the unity of the spirit and bond of peace might be preserved among its members, it is not to be supposed that those to whom I now address myself are governed by it.

The consideration of their being professed members of that branch of the Christian church established in this country, added to that of their being serious and spiritually-minded persons, obliges me to conclude, that they have some better reason to give for their connection with the church, than what is to be derived from the accidental circumstance of their having been born in its communion. I therefore conclude, as in charity I ought, that it is either from an imperfect knowledge of, or want of due attention to, the nature and design of the Christian church, as a regular and *visible* society, together with a partial view of

the end of its establishment, that they are thus induced to act in contradiction to it.

It is a prevailing notion of modern times, that where the Gospel of CHRIST is preached, there the church of CHRIST is assembled.

This notion, from its plausibility, has with many gained a degree of credit, to which, upon examination, it will not be found entitled. In some sense, indeed, every private Christian family, assembled for the purpose of religious worship, may be considered as a church of CHRIST; but when we speak of the church as a *public body*, under the direction of its appointed ministers, this mode of expression is certainly not to be admitted. As the church does not make the doctrine, so neither does the doctrine make the church. These two ideas, though designed to be inseparably connected, have nevertheless each a distinct and appropriate meaning. The *church* is the *candlestick*; the *doctrine* the *light* set upon it, for the purpose of illuminating the place where it is fixed. The candlestick without the light is an useless piece of furniture. On the other hand, the light without the candlestick to hold it is in continual danger of being thrown down and extinguished.

In the book called the Revelation of ST. JOHN, the explanation of the first vision given by the angel was, that the *seven candlesticks* signified the *seven churches* of Asia; and the seven stars, which he held in his right-hand, the seven angels (or bishops) of those seven churches. Our SAVIOUR, in allusion to his Gospel, is emblematically stiled “the *day-star* from on high;” “the *light* which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” JOHN the Baptist is called “a burning and a *shining light*;” and his Apostles, “the *light of the world*.” In conformity with this idea of giving *light* to a world in darkness, the angel, in the vision above-mentioned, calls the bishops of the churches *stars*, in allusion to their office, which was to spread the *light* of Gospel truth through their respective dioceses.

The threat, in the course of this vision, pronounced against the church of Ephesus, was, that if she did not repent, and do her first works, her *candlestick* should be removed, *i. e.* her ministry should be taken away, and she should be no longer an Apostolic church. A threat which has been since carried into complete execution, in the case of all the churches above-mentioned.

From hence we see, that the church, as it was established, that it might be (what the Apostle calls it) “the ground and pillar of the truth,” so it is preserved in the world for the sake of the truth. When that truth is turned into a lie; in other words, when the doctrine of the church becomes so corrupt, as no longer to promote the end for which the church was originally established; the *candlestick*, we have to expect, will be removed; the ecclesiastical edifice, originally built upon the Apostles, will be taken down; and men left in that state of darkness, in which the experience of the world tells us they must live, when the light which shineth from on high is withdrawn.

From the position here advanced then, upon the authority of the Apostle, that the church is preserved in the world for the sake of the truth contained in it; the inference is, that the truth, abstractedly considered, does not constitute the church; for, upon that supposition, the establishment of the church, as its guardian and preservative, had been unnecessary. The circumstance of their having been joined together by God leads us to conclude, that the church and the truth cannot long exist in a perfect state, independent of each other; and the experiment of separating them has never been attempted by man,

without the evil consequences attendant upon it having been manifested in a greater or less degree.*

But allowing that the Gospel may be preached out of the church, and it is not said that the removal of the light from the candlestick is always immediately followed by its extinction, still the members of the church ought not to go out of the church after it; for this appears to be doing evil that good may come of it, by making an obedience to God's ordinance give way to a supposed spiritual advantage.

It will be urged, perhaps, that, in a matter of that essential concern as the salvation of a soul, all attention to the nature of the Christian church will be swallowed up in the grand consideration of

* "In all the annals of the church, whether under the Law or the Gospel, there is not one instance of a schism against the priesthood which God had appointed, but great errors in doctrine and worship did follow it. Thus the priesthood which MICAH set up of his own head, and that which JEROBOAM set up in opposition to that of AARON, both ended in idolatry. Thus the Novatians and Donatists, who made schisms against their bishops, fell into grievous errors, though they did not renounce the faith.

"What hydra heresies, and monstrous sects, fifty or sixty at one time, flowed like a torrent into England, in the times of forty-one, after episcopacy was thrown down.

"So evident is that saying, that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, that we can hardly find any error which has come into the church, but upon an infraction made upon the episcopal authority." LESLEY.

following the sound of the Gospel, wherever it is to be heard.

Had man been left to judge absolutely for himself in this business, it might have been difficult to have found an answer to the foregoing position; but God having judged for him, the most certain provision for man's salvation will doubtless be found in the use of the means appointed by God for that purpose; and these are to be had in the church.

It is not, therefore, a consideration of so little importance as some men imagine, by whose ministry our prayers are offered up to God, or through whose hands Divine ordinances are received: for we are assured, the blessings and graces which Christianity teaches us to expect from these ordinances, can *ordinarily* be derived from them, only when administered according to CHRIST's institution, by persons regularly called, as he has directed. Where such may be had, and we may lawfully join with them, and use their ministry; to separate from them, is to rebel against the authority of CHRIST, who appointed them.

But it is alleged by those who occasionally separate from our church, that the clergy of it possess neither that zeal nor knowledge, which ought to characterize their profession; that their preaching is

not that plain preaching of the cross which it ought to be, but a species of human philosophy, which can never make the hearer wise unto salvation.

I am not more surprised that such a charge should be brought, by those who have suffered an acquaintance with the conduct of some ministers of the church, and an attachment to certain preachers out of it, to create in their minds unfortunate prejudices, than I am persuaded that the ground for such a charge, as applicable to the great body of our clergy, does not in these days exist. The truth, I believe, is, that the defect of individuals among the clergy has been industriously magnified into a general plea for separation from the church; which is, in fact, to pronounce that sentence upon the cause, which ought to have been confined to the party, by whose unskilfulness it has been injured.

The Gospel, it shall be admitted, is not preached exactly in the same manner in the church, as it *sometimes* is out of it; and God forbid it should. From the general tenour of the writings of those, to whom the ministerial office was originally committed, who, from the circumstance of their being under the immediate direction of the spirit, must be considered perfect models for imitation; the religion of CHRIST

appears to be a comprehensive system of faith and morality; the one considered as the foundation, the other the superstructure of the Christian building. Now we know that where the foundation is not firmly laid, the superstructure raised upon it, however excellent the materials of which it is composed, must in a short time fall to the ground. But we also know, that where the whole time is spent in laying the foundation, the work not being carried above ground, nothing will appear to which the term *building* can with propriety be applied. The object, therefore, which the Christian divine ought to have in view, is so to join the two parts of the Christian edifice, that they may together form one compleat building; in other words, so to connect faith and obedience, those two parts of the Divine scheme of salvation, that they may constitute that perfect system of Christianity, whereby “man may become qualified for his heavenly inheritance.”

Whoever sees the subject in this light, and he who does not is unqualified for a teacher of Christianity, will consider it to be his duty to pay that attention to both parts of the Christian system, which, according to his best judgment, the circumstances of those committed to his charge may require. He will,

therefore, from time to time, be a preacher of *morality*; and he must be so, if he would fully discharge his office; not the *morality of the heathen*, which looks to the merit of the work as its title to reward, but *the morality of the Christian*; a morality built upon the Gospel foundation, and deriving all its value from the principle upon which it is performed; a morality dependent upon Divine grace, and looking only to Divine grace for acceptance, upon the terms of the Gospel covenant.

The common objection, therefore, that is made to the *moral* preaching in our churches, is inapplicable to that species of morality of which we are now speaking; and which, I trust, is now generally inculcated. A morality of this nature, essential to the completion of the Christian plan of salvation, must be preached; and where it is not, the whole truth, as it is in CHRIST JESUS, not being delivered, the Gospel is, as it were, preached by halves; and the consequence is, what it too generally has been, that the hearers of it are a sort of *half Christians*; standing (if we may so say) in a tottering condition upon one leg; whilst the design of the Christian revelation was, that they should stand firmly upon two.

Unfortunately, these pious members of our church, (for in that light I am most willing to consider them) who are led to an occasional separation, from a zeal which they feel for the glory of the blessed Author of salvation, suffer themselves to be frightened with the sound of a word, to which they themselves affix a wrong idea: hence it has happened, that the word has oftentimes been condemned, without the meaning annexed to it by the clergy, from whom they turn away, having been fairly examined; upon the same principle, that indiscriminating Christians are frightened with the words *cross*, *altar*, *sacrifice*, and *priest*, words peculiarly characteristic of the Christian church, because they have been severally abused in the Romish communion.

Might I be permitted to speak for the clergy, whom as a body I have always considered to be greatly misrepresented on this subject, (for in all general conclusions individual cases must be put out of the question;) I should not think that I incurred a risk of contradiction by saying, that the doctrine which they preach corresponded in the main with the revelation they have received. There was a time, indeed, when the doctrine of the cross was kept too much out of sight; and when the language of our pulpits, it

must be confessed, was calculated to teach men to place a vain dependence on *moral* performances. But it should in justice be considered that this was an extreme, which grew out of a laudable desire to counteract the fatal effects of that opposite and not less dangerous doctrine, by which the Christianity of this country had long been disgraced. But neither the writings nor discourses of the present clergy, so far as my acquaintance with them has extended, justify, *generally speaking*, the same charge being brought against them.

They preach, I trust, *CHRIST crucified*, as the foundation of the Christian building; and “other foundation can no man lay.” They look, generally speaking, to the Cross as to fallen man’s *only hope*, and *only title* to salvation. But it being the office of the Christian ministry “rightly to divide the word of truth,” the grand object they have before them is, *so* to preach the doctrine of the Cross that no erroneous conclusion may be drawn from it.

Considering that *CHRIST*, by his death, has redeemed fallen man from the curse of the law, and placed him, if the expression may be allowed, in a *salvable* condition; they occasionally feel themselves called upon to enforce obedience to the moral law, as necessary to the accomplishment of the Christian

scheme; necessary to bring fallen man into a state of acceptance with GOD, by qualifying him for the salvation which has been purchased.

Man's title to eternal life has been founded on an act of Divine grace and covenant from the beginning. For ADAM in his state of innocence had no right to immortality, till GOD was pleased to make it over to him by covenant. Still it was a right suspended on the performance of a condition. This right lost by the fall, through the mercy of the second covenant, has been re-established in JESUS CHRIST. Man therefore, subsequent to the fall, with respect to a right to eternal life, stands on the same ground that ADAM did previous to that event. His right to eternal life being, what ADAM's originally was, a right founded on an act of Divine grace and covenant, but dependent on the performance of a condition.*

Hence it becomes necessary, that a proper distinction should be made between the works of the law, considered as making any part of man's *title* to eternal salvation; and those works which are required

* The reader will find this subject handled at large, and fully established by authorities from the early writers of the church, in a "Discourse on the first covenant and state of man before the fall," by the learned Bishop BULL. 8vo edit, vol. iii.

to be performed under the Gospel, as the condition on which that title has been suspended. Whoever sees works in the former light, is what the judaizing Christian was in ST. PAUL's day; he is going about to "establish his own righteousness, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God." But if works are weighed in their proper scale, not as man's *title* to eternal salvation, but his *qualification* for it, upon the Gospel axiom, that "without holiness no man shall see the LORD," it appears to be of essential importance that they should be pressed upon Christians at all times, as the *condition* upon which they are taught to look for the completion of the Divine covenant. "They shall walk with me in white," says CHRIST, "for they are worthy." Rev. iii. 4. *Worthy*, not absolutely so in themselves, but *relatively* so; worthy, in that sense in which God, through CHRIST, graciously thinks fit to consider them. In this sense, "blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have *right* to the tree of life, and may enter into the city of God." Rev. xxii. 14. A conditional right established by *grace on the part of God*, not by *merit on the part of man*; for that, we trust, is universally disclaimed. God has graciously condescended to become, in a *certain sense*,

man's debtor; in the language of ST. AUGUSTINE, "non aliquid debendo, sed omnia promittendo, DEUS se facit debitorem." Upon this ground works become entitled to reward;* not because they possess *in themselves* a title to reward, but because a gracious GOD is pleased, through CHRIST, to regard them as proper subjects for it. Such is the language of Scripture; such the doctrine of the church of England.

But there is a manner of stating this subject, very common to those who entertain a low opinion of our clergy; upon which it may be proper to remark.

The revelation of the Gospel, so far as it respects the essential point of salvation, delivers a plain and intelligible language. It says to fallen man, believe rightly, and obey conscientiously; and through the merits of a crucified SAVIOUR thou shalt enter into life. In the comprehensive language of the Apostle,

* Extremum utrumque omni curâ vitandum: tum eorum qui opera nostra per se vitæ eternæ meritoria statuunt, (error iste pontificiorum quorundam toto animo detestandus est) tum eorum etiam, qui eadem opera ullam aliam cum cœlesti præmio connexionem habere præter hunc, quòd sint fidei ejus, cui salus promittitur, signa, omniò negant. Hæc enim sententia non paucis, usque clarissimis scripturæ testimoniis (ut vidimus) apertum bellum indicit. Media itaque via hic tenenda est, ut dicamus, relationis istius, quam ad vitam æternam habent opera nostra, unicum illud esse fundamentum, *quod sint conditio in fœdore Evangelico requisita*, cui præstitæ ex eodem gratioso fœdore præmium cæleste indulgeatur. BULL. Harm. Apost. cap. v. sect. 5.

it teaches him to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour JESUS CHRIST; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus ii. 12. The doctrine of salvation, then, is not a scheme of natural philosophy; it is not a system of civil policy; nor is it the art of fine speaking and rhetorical discourse. But it teaches men of every rank the duties of their respective stations; what they are to believe, and what to do, in order to their being saved. At the same time it furnishes directions and assistances for the resisting and overcoming the temptations with which they are assailed, together with the best and most powerful arguments for the promotion of that holiness, which constitutes the indispensable preparative to eternal happiness.

If we will receive this doctrine as it has been revealed, we certainly shall be saved by it. But if we will make a doctrine for ourselves, different from that which CHRIST has taught, it matters not on which side the error lies, whether by reposing a false confidence on the one hand, or possessing an evil heart of

unbelief on the other; in either case we make void the scheme of salvation that has been projected, and our miscarriage must be inevitable.

Now the persons to whom I immediately allude, have always appeared to me to *confound*, rather than to *explain*, the Christian doctrine; by representing faith as comprehensive of all Christian duties. Where true faith is, there, they tell you, will be repentance, obedience, and holiness of life; in short every thing that tends to the completion of the Christian character. Certainly where *true faith* is, (understanding thereby true *lively* faith) so long as it continues in that state, it must be possessed of all the properties belonging to it. But this is a description of what Christian faith ought to be, when in its perfect state, accompanied with its correspondent effects; not what faith, *abstractedly considered*, really is. As such, though it possibly may do no harm, whilst confined to the minds of those persons, who through Divine grace feel themselves disposed to that life of holiness, to which Christian faith was designed to lead; yet it will do, and has done much injury to the Christian cause, when considered in connection with that erroneous and dangerous conclusion, which ignorant and unsanctified men have at all times been ready to draw from it.

To say that faith, by which we understand a *firm belief in CHRIST*, as the whole and sole cause of salvation, will secure to man the possession of all those graces and virtues necessary to adorn his Christian profession, is, in other words, to say, that when the foundation is well laid, it will of itself raise the superstructure; or, to make use of another scripture allusion, where the root of the tree is planted in CHRIST, Christian fruit will be the consequent produce of the branches. But in this case facts are, alas! often against us.

“No corrupt tree bringeth forth good fruit.” Man, in his present state, is that corrupt tree of nature, from which no spiritual fruit is to be expected. But it does not from hence follow, that when this corrupt tree is moved into GOD’S nursery, if we may be allowed the expression, and has its root planted in Christian soil, that it will of course bring forth good fruit; for this must depend upon circumstances, necessary to be taken into the account. The situation of a tree may be improved, without any material change being produced in its actual condition. It is not sufficient, therefore, that this tree of nature (to carry on our allusion) be moved out of a barren and unfruitful soil; it must moreover be regularly pruned

and trained, and the wild and luxuriant branches must be carefully and constantly cut back, that proper nourishment may be carried to the bearing wood; should not this process be regularly pursued, in spite of the soil in which the root stands, no fruit will be brought to perfection.

Similar to this is the conclusion which our SAVIOUR has led us to draw upon this subject, where he represents himself under the emblem of the vine, and his Father under that of the husbandman. "Every branch in me," says CHRIST, "that beareth not fruit, the husbandman taketh away." By which we understand, that *being in CHRIST*, i. e. having faith in CHRIST as a SAVIOUR, and *bearing Christian fruit*, do not always mean the same thing. Care, consequently, should be taken, that these two different meanings be not confounded. *Faith in CHRIST* is allowed to be, if we may so say, the grand germinating principle of the whole spiritual creation. "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine." But though the branch does abide in the vine, should no sap from the root be conveyed into it, it will still be unfruitful.

In this particular address, therefore, to his Apostles, our SAVIOUR may be understood as telling his dis-

ciples at large, that they must not only abide in him, but that *his spirit must also abide in them*, if they would become what Christianity was designed to make them, “purified persons, zealous of good works.” Without the spirit of CHRIST, it is certain, we are none of his. The shadow, in this case, will not be taken for the substance. As members of his church, we may, in some sense, be said *to be in CHRIST*; but being *dead*, not *living* members of it, we are those unfruitful branches of the vine, which the husbandman taketh away.

It is readily allowed, that many of those spiritual persons, who occasionally separate from the church, see the subject in the light in which it is here placed; although the gratitude which they feel towards that SAVIOUR, who has wrought the great work of salvation, accompanied with a desire to guard against any self-sufficient claims on the part of man, upon the ground of his own performances, induces them at times to give that partial account of the Gospel plan of salvation, which experience has proved to be unfavourable to the promotion of its general purpose. I say, *partial* account of the Gospel plan of salvation; because the whole truth, as it is in JESUS CHRIST, is not fairly brought forward.

When speaking, for instance, of the fundamentals of Christianity, they often neglect to pay due regard to those other parts which are necessary to the perfection of the Christian scheme. They describe Christianity, as “a scheme for justifying the ungodly;” “for reconciling us to GOD when enemies;” “and the fruits of holiness* as the effects, not the cause of our justification;” as “a scheme which opens the door of mercy to the greatest and vilest of penitent sinners.”† In *one sense*, all this is certainly true; and GOD forbid that the clergy of the church should preach other doctrine; that they should not bear their most decided testimony against all pretensions to salvation, upon the ground of *human merit*;

* Provided Christians are disposed to understand one another; this subject, it is presumed, need not to furnish occasion for dispute: because it will probably be found, that the same thing is meant, although the mode of expression may be different. The “fruits of holiness” are both the effects and the cause of justification, though in different senses. They are the effects of our justification in baptism; by which sacrament the grace of the Holy Spirit, “from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, do proceed,” was originally conferred on the party; whilst, in another sense, the fruits of holiness are, not in the strict sense of the word, *the cause*, but the condition, or as Bishop BULL’s term is, the “*causa sine qua non*,” *that without which* our final justification at the day of judgment will not take place: for “without holiness no man shall see the LORD.”

† WILBERFORCE’S Practical View, p. 121, 122.

for fallen man can have no claim upon his Creator but by virtue of an act of grace that has been passed in his favour. But this act, it is to be observed, contains in it certain conditions; the performance of which, though not to be considered as *man's title* to the benefits of the act in question, is nevertheless necessary, according to the revelation of the Divine will, to secure to him their possession.*

When, therefore, the Gospel covenant, of which this act of free grace on the part of CHRIST constitutes the basis, is kept out of sight; when performances and conditions on man's part are decried, upon the laudable, though mistaken, idea of preventing all encroachment upon the benefits of CHRIST's satisfaction, as extended to us freely "without money and without price;" when the observance of the moral precepts of the Gospel, enforced by the awful consideration, that God "will judge every man according to his works," is described as "*vain wisdom, and false philosophy*;"† and when the work and commandment brought forward to the attention of the Christian disciple, as it were in opposition to this

* The reader will find this subject handled at large in "*Vindiciæ Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*," cap. vi.

† WILBERFORCE'S *Practical View*, p. 131,

revealed account of a future judgment, are comprehended in this one act of faith, that he “should believe in the name of JESUS CHRIST;” we cannot be surpris’d, that persons who have formed no adequate conception of the Christian scheme of salvation, considered not only as providing a redemption from the immediate consequences of the fall, but also means for the restoration of the fallen creature, to that spiritual state which can alone qualify him for a spiritual inheritance; should, by taking *part* of the Gospel for the *whole* of it, fall short of the perfection to which it was designed to lead.*

* The following is a specimen of the doctrine propagated by one of those self-constituted itinerant teachers, who, to the misfortune of this country, the abuse of toleration, “that glory and disgrace of Protestantism,” as it was called by a late learned Bishop,† is now pouring forth upon us; the channel from whence I received it leaving me no room to doubt of its authenticity. “The regular Clergy know nothing of Christianity; their whole preaching is, *work, work*. They do not know, you cannot work. You must wait your call—and for your comfort I tell you, it is never too late. If on your sick-bed you can call out on the name of JESUS, or groan JESUS, or even whisper JESUS with your last breath, you are safe.” How far such a mode of preaching (and I have reason to think it to be by no means an uncommon one) is calculated to promote the two great ends of religion,—the honour of God, and the welfare of mankind,—the reader will judge. Grieved am I to think, that the lower order of people in this country, who, generally speaking, are well disposed to religion, should be liable to be thus deluded.

† Bishop LOWTH’s Sermon before the Society for promoting the Gospel. 1771.

Faith in the all-sufficient merits of a crucified Redeemer, must, by all who receive the Gospel, be admitted as the Christian's only hope; it being his *only title* to salvation. Through the door of faith, the Christian disciple is admitted into the church; as a member of the church, he is entitled to all the benefits of the Christian dispensation. These benefits are, redemption from a state of certain condemnation, and a restoration to a state of possible or conditional salvation; together with a gracious provision of assistance to make that salvation sure. But whether this state of *possible* or conditional salvation through CHRIST may become a state of *actual* salvation to the believing party, must depend upon the use made of the means vouchsafed for that purpose. For although faith is the leading condition of salvation, and the foundation of all Christian graces and virtues, upon the Gospel axiom, "that without CHRIST we *can do nothing*," yet to represent faith as constituting the completion of the Christian character, upon the idea that it *necessarily* comprehends under it the performance of all Christian duties, is what the scripture, I conceive, no where warrants, and what experience continually contradicts. A writer, who has lately favoured the world with his thoughts on this subject, and with

whom every Christian must wish to join in opinion, has told us, "that true faith is in scripture regarded as the radical principle of holiness." Thus far every one who understands the Gospel must agree with him. But when we are told by this same writer,* that where the root exists, the proper fruit will be brought forth, we feel ourselves called upon to deny the conclusion; because it may lead to consequences fatal to the cause it is designed to serve. Nor does the proof brought from ST. JAMES, in support of it, strike me in the light in which it is placed on this occasion. ST. JAMES has always appeared to me to speak, not of a man who merely says that he has faith, and has it not; but of one who actually possesses faith, but a faith unavailable to salvation, in consequence of its being unaccompanied by its correspondent effects. The reader, by turning to the chapter referred to, (JAMES ii.) and reading from the 14th verse to the end of it, will be qualified to judge for himself.

Christian fruit, it is allowed, can grow only on the Christian tree. But it does not follow, (as it has been above observed) that where the root of this tree exists, there the fruits of it will *necessarily* be brought forth. These are by no means conver-

* WILBERFORCE'S Practical View, p. 122.

tible propositions. To represent them as such, is to say in other words, that principles and practice always go together; whereas the fact is, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, they are too often at variance with each other. And the general language of scripture agrees with this position; in which faith and works, the tree and its fruits, are so clearly distinguished from each other, that no man who considers that the Bible, as containing a Divine revelation, must be uniform and consistent in all its parts, can, it should be supposed, be at a loss for his conclusion.

It is true, faith is often represented in scripture as the *completion* of the Christian plan of salvation. And so, when taken in its full and finished state, as made *perfect by works*, according to ST. JAMES's description, it certainly is. But we are now guarding against a mistake, to which an *unqualified* use of this term often leads.

When our SAVIOUR laid the foundation of his religion, he annexed salvation to *faith*; because *faith in him* was the *basis* of that plan of salvation which he came to publish to the world. When ST. PAUL told the Jews that they must be saved by *faith*, and not by the *works of the law*; and that the Gospel alone contained the power of GOD unto salvation

unto every one that believeth; his object was to oppose the new dispensation, whose basis was *faith in CHRIST crucified*, to that old one which CHRIST came to take away; because, in consequence of the fall, man was no longer in a condition to be saved by it. Upon the Jew renouncing all dependence upon his own righteousness, and professing his faith in CHRIST crucified, as the author and finisher of his salvation, he was admitted into the privileges of the Gospel covenant. But in this case *his faith* was, as ST. IGNATIUS calls it, “the *beginning* or the *principle* of his Christian life.” It gave him admission into the Christian church. Now had ST. PAUL thought, that where this principle was once established, it would of course draw after it all those graces and virtues necessary to render it effectual to salvation; in other words, had he thought that the faith, which gave admission into the church, would of course make the party a *perfect* member of it, he would not have furnished his disciples with that complete system of moral duties which is to be found in his writings. If he had thought that faith included under it Christian practice, his direction to TITUS, that the constant subject of his preaching should be, “that those who *believed in God* (those

who professed the faith) should be careful to maintain good works," had been superfluous.

If ST. PETER had thought that Christian faith was necessarily of that prolific nature, that it could no where exist without producing its proper fruits, he would not, after having mentioned the precious faith obtained through the righteousness of GOD, have directed his disciples "to give all diligence to *add to their faith*, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." The important reason for this direction he immediately subjoins: "For" (continues the Apostle) "if these be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. But he that lacketh these things is blind." He may have a knowledge of our Lord JESUS CHRIST as the Saviour of mankind, and profess his faith in him as such; but his faith being *barren* and *unfruitful* will profit him nothing. "Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to *make your calling and election sure*: for if you do these things, ye shall never fall. For *so* (or upon this condition) an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly

into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.*

This plain passage from ST. PETER places the whole plan of salvation through CHRIST fairly before us. It represents the exceeding great and precious promises which have been obtained for man, through the righteousness of CHRIST, as the basis of his salvation; but the bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, as the condition upon which that salvation will be ultimately realized. In this sense, the writings of ST. PAUL and ST. JAMES, and all other parts of scripture, will be found to harmonize; and we need no longer be afraid to talk of works, if we represent them, as the learned Bishop BULL,† in vindication of

* 2 PETER i. 5, 6, &c.

† “Accedamus jam ad alterum istud, quod breviter notandum duximus; nempe, phrasi illâ, ἐξ ἑγῶν, non id voluisse JACOBUM opera nostra esse justificationis nostræ causam *principalem* aut *meritoriam*; illa quippe in merâ et gratuita DEI Patris misericordiâ, hæc in CHRISTI solius morte ac meritis unicè statuenda est, et ab Apostolo revera statuitur. Etenim quamvis particula ἐξ eam nonnunquam vim obtineat, sæpe tamen adhibere solet sensu quodam mitiori, ut notet *medium quodcumque rei obtinendæ, sive conditionem præcedaneam*, quæ vulgo causâ *sine qua non* dicitur, licet reverà vix causæ nomen mereatur. Atque is loquendi modus neque a communi sensu abhorret, neque a stylo scripturæ alienus est. Ut enim alia taceam, cum dicitur homo ἐκ πιστεως δικαιοθαι, particula ἐκ manifestè hoc sensu sumitur. Quippe ne ipsâ quidem fide tanquam

ST. JAMES, has represented them; not as “either the *principal* or the *meritorious* cause of man’s salvation, but as only the *condition*, upon which, according to the terms of the Gospel covenant, man is to become partaker of it.”

There is another part of this respectable writer’s publication, which, as it strikes me, ought to be read with some comment; because, as it stands, it seems calculated to lead the indiscriminating reader to a conclusion different, I should suppose, from that meant to be conveyed by it. The part alluded to is to be found in p. 327 and 328, and runs thus: “But the nature of the holiness, to which the desires of the true Christian are directed, is no other than the restoration of the image of God; and as to the manner of acquiring it, disclaiming with indignation every idea of attaining it by his own strength, all his hopes of possessing it rest altogether on the Divine assurances of the operation of the Holy Spirit, in those

causa principali, imo non ut causâ omnino, nisi improprie dictâ, justificari aliquis dici potest. Dicitur igitur homo, ἐξ ἑργῶν δικαιοῦσθαι, quia bona opera conditio sunt, juxta ordinationem divinam in Evangelico fœdere stabilitam necessario in hoc requisita, ut quis justificetur, i. e. remissionem peccatorum per CHRISTUM partam obtineat, Deoque ad salutem gratus et acceptus fiat.”

BULL. Harmon. Apostol. cap. i. § 8.

who cordially embrace the Gospel of CHRIST.”—
Thus far we are perfectly agreed.

To proceed with our author:

“He knows, therefore, that this holiness is not to precede his reconciliation to GOD, and be its cause; but to follow it, and be its effect. That in short it is by faith in CHRIST only, that he is to be justified in the sight of GOD; to be delivered from the condition of a child of wrath, and a slave of SATAN; to be adopted into the family of GOD; to become an heir of GOD, and a joint heir with CHRIST; entitled to all the privileges which belong to this high relation, here to the spirit of grace, and a partial renewal after the image of his Creator; hereafter, to the more perfect possession of the Divine likeness, and an inheritance of eternal glory.”

That *general reconciliation* of GOD to *man* in his fallen condition, through the sacrifice of CHRIST, by virtue of which he is placed in a state of conditional salvation under the new covenant, seems here not sufficiently distinguished from that *particular reconciliation* of GOD to the *individual* in his redeemed condition, when restored to that degree of likeness to his Creator necessary to qualify him for admission into his presence.

There can be no such thing as holiness in man, independent of the operation of the Holy Spirit; and the work of the Holy Spirit being the part of the Gospel scheme of salvation consequent upon that all-sufficient sacrifice by which alone God became reconciled to his fallen creatures, it certainly follows, that this work cannot precede the cause which gave it birth.

But every one admitted into the church is, in some sense, in a state of reconciliation with God; that is, he is taken out of a condemned condition, in which there can be no holiness, and placed in a condition of grace and relative holiness; in consequence of his dedication to the service of God in baptism. But whether this relative holiness may become perfect holiness, effectual to the salvation of the party, must depend upon subsequent considerations. The Apostle therefore, after having first mentioned God's reconciliation to man in CHRIST, as the foundation of all our hope, proceeds to remind us of man's reconciliation to God, as necessary to give effect to the former. "We pray you in CHRIST's stead, be ye reconciled to God:" and how this is to be effected, the Apostle proceeds to inform us; "We pray you receive not the grace of God in vain;" but having in consequence of God's reconciliation to man, the

promises of an eternal inheritance through CHRIST, and of Divine assistance to qualify us for it, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of GOD:” in other words let the work of the Holy Ghost, to whose assistance the dispensation of grace has given us a title, be carried on to perfection in our hearts; and *so* shall the work of reconciliation between GOD and man be rendered complete.*

The line of distinction between *professing* faith and *practising* faith should at all times be so marked, as to leave a distinct idea upon the mind respecting a subject which has been so open to misconception. *Professing faith*, it is to be observed, gives admission only into the church of CHRIST, and a title to the privileges of the baptismal covenant. *Practising faith*, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, is what renders that admission a title of *real* value; by producing that renewal of our fallen nature, which secures our inheritance of eternal glory.

Words need not be multiplied to convince the reader, that these are two very different things, and that the one does not *necessarily* comprehend the

* 2 Cor. v. 20; vii. 1.

other. The remark, therefore, subjoined by our author to the above passage, "that faith, where genuine, always supposes repentance, abhorrence of sin, &c." p. 328, is calculated to lead into error, because it teaches the reader to take for granted, what must always remain to be proved.

For, allowing that the practical precepts of Christianity do grow out of her peculiar doctrines, which is certainly true; yet that they are "*inseparably connected with them*,"* is a position not to be admitted: for in such case faith and practice may be considered but as two words for the same thing; and it becomes impossible for professors "to hold the truth in unrighteousness;" which ST. PAUL tells us some did in his days, and which, in consequence of the corrupt nature of man, some will do in a greater or less degree in every stage of the Christian church. The learned Bishop BULL has so clearly stated this subject, as to render further enlargement upon it unnecessary.*

* WILBERFORCE, p. 382.

* "Quod jactant de instrumentalitate fidei in justificationis negotio, nihil etiam quam *meram et inanem subtilitatem* redolet. Propterquam enim quod extra scripturas hic loquuntur, si instrumentum strictè et propriè sumatur pro causâ efficiente minus principali, clarum est, *fidem justificationis instrumentum nullo modo dici posse*. Nam primò, *cum justificatio sit actio Dei solius, eaque tota extra nos*

The Gospel scheme of salvation can then only be complete, when the whole of it is taken together; when each part of the Christian obligation, comprehended under the general terms of faith, repentance, and obedience, is suffered to have its due weight in the scale of human estimation.

In a word, that man is not to be saved by any works of righteousness of his own, because, in confe-

producta, quomodo vel fides nostra, vel quævis nostra actio ad justificationis effectum producendum physicam altam efficientiam habeat, prorsus ακαταληπτον est. Deinde omnis causa instrumentalis, (ut jam innuimus) suo modo in effectum influit, eique effecti productio propriè attribui potest. Jam verò, cum justificatio nihil aliud sit quàm gratiosus DEI actus, quo peccata nostra nobis condonet, ac nos ad salutem acceptet, valdè absurdum esset dicere, vel fidem, vel opera nostra, vel quidvis aliud nostrî, aut remittere peccata nostra, aut personas nostras acceptare; quod tamen, si instrumentalis causa justificationis fides sit, planè discendum esset. Etiam si igitur concederemus, habitum fidei esse instrumentum istius actûs quo CHRISTUM amplectimur; qui tamen inde intulerit, fidem esse justificationis instrumentum, manifestissimæ certè inconsequentix reus tenebitur. Ut ergo quod res est dicam, si fidem instrumentum esse velimus, fieri non potest, ut concipiatur alio modo instrumentum esse, quàm quatenus opus est ex prescripto, et per gratiam DEI à nobis præstitum. Conditio enim, quatenus præstita est, aliquo modo medium, sive instrumentum dici potest, quo consequimur rem, *quæ sub conditione promittitur.* Et vocatur hoc a nonnullis instrumentum morale. Et si hoc sensu instrumentum sumatur (nempe pro conditione sive instrumento morali) fidem esse unicum justificationis instrumentum omnino negamus; cum, ut satis evincimus, etiam pœnitentiæ opera non minus necessaria ad justificationem obtinendam a Spiritu Sancto disertè statuantur.”—BULL. Harmon. Apost. cap. ii. § 9.

quence of their imperfection, they can have no merit in the eyes of GOD, but by what JESUS CHRIST has done and suffered for him, is a doctrine which cannot be too unequivocally expressed; at the same time it is to be remembered, that the qualification of the party, through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, is the indispensable condition upon which salvation through CHRIST is suspended.

Satisfied in my mind that there can be no real difference of opinion between this respectable author and myself upon this matter, he will not, I flatter myself, feel offended at my endeavour to counteract a conclusion, to which certain unqualified passages, against which the best of writers are not always upon their guard, may possibly lead. The apparent disagreement between us, (if I have been correct in my remarks) arises from the different idea annexed to *faith*, considered either as a comprehensive term, including under it all the conditions of the Gospel covenant on man's part, or the *simple act of believing* the Christian doctrine, unaccompanied with that spiritual transformation of the sinner, necessary to render the death of CHRIST effectual to his salvation. These two ideas, applicable to faith in *its different stages*, ought at all times to be clearly distinguished,

to qualify the Christian to form a correct judgment upon this important subject.

The account given by this author of the actual state of Christianity in this country is, it is to be feared, but too true. Vital Christianity we can scarce expect to find at a time, when the meaning annexed to that term is, to the bulk of professing Christians, become unintelligible. In this degenerate state of things, every man who feels for the honour of God, and the welfare of the community, must regard with gratitude and respect an author, whose professed object it is to restore this dead thing, *modern Christianity*, to life and vigour; and, in the scripture sense, will bid him "God speed." But whilst I agree with this author in his account of the declining state of genuine Christianity, I cannot so perfectly agree with him with respect to one cause, to which the further continuance of that decline is to be attributed.

The clergy of the church, as we have already observed, soon after the Restoration, with a view to counteract the abuse that had been made of the doctrine of grace, gave into the opposite extreme. Finding the stick bent too much one way, they injudiciously adopted the natural process of bending it the other, with the view of bringing it straight. But

the clergy of the present day do not, I conceive, stand in the same predicament.

Doctrinal points, it shall be admitted, are not so often, nor so powerfully, enforced in our pulpits as they once were, or as they ought to be; but I do not recollect having ever heard a sermon which, in fair construction, placed man's hopes of happiness upon the unfound ground of his own moral performances. Indeed I am inclined to hope that the generality of hearers, in the present day, possess no relish for such heathenish doctrine. There is a wide difference, it will be allowed, between powerfully enforcing a fundamental article of the Christian faith, and preaching a doctrine incompatible with it. However deficient some of our clergy may have been in the former case, instances, I trust, are very rare of their being found guilty in the latter; thereby proving themselves declared traitors to the cause they have in charge to maintain.

It is not consistent with candour, from incautious language occasionally made use of, (and what man is always so guarded in his expressions, as to bid defiance to misconstruction?) to draw those conclusions either for an author or a speaker, which they themselves do not acknowledge. If, therefore, the subject

of CHRIST crucified be not always taken up in our pulpits, yet when it is considered that the sermon is accompanied with a liturgy, which preaches that saving doctrine throughout; charity forbids me to conclude, unless upon very evident ground, that it is the design of the preacher to place the Christian's hope upon any other foundation.

May it not happen, then, that judgment in this case has sometimes been too hastily formed? A person, for instance, who entertains the unfavourable idea here alluded to, respecting our clergy, enters a church with a certain prejudice in his mind: and should it so happen, that the object of the preacher's discourse is the enforcement of some practical duty of Christianity, he leaves the church in disgust, with the conclusion that nothing but *moral* preaching is to be heard in it. He attends, it may be, some irregular place of worship in the evening, where the fundamental doctrine of the cross happens to be the subject of the preacher's discourse; he goes away confirmed in the conclusion drawn in the morning; and the clergy of the church are, in consequence, unequivocally condemned. Whereas, had this same person attended the same church the following Sunday, he might have heard the same minister, perhaps, who on

the preceding Sunday had taken up a practical duty of Christianity into the pulpit, now enforcing that same doctrine of the cross, which had given the preaching of the conventicle the decided preference in his mind.

Now would this person, before he pronounces sentence in this case, but consider, that it is the duty of a Christian minister, not to dwell altogether on the fundamental truths of religion; but also (to make use of our author's words) "to trace and lay open all the secret motions of inward corruption, and to instruct his hearers, how best to conduct themselves in every distinct part of the Christian warfare; how best to strive against each particular vice, and to cultivate each grace of the Christian character;" he would conclude, that this could not otherwise be done, than by dedicating a considerable portion of his public instructions to the due enforcement of the *practical duties of Christianity*; that the man of God may "become perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work." In doing this, if the clergy are not to have credit given them for preaching morality upon a *Christian plan*, they are placed in that unfortunate situation, as not to have it in their power to discharge their office to the satisfaction either of themselves or their hearers.

It is submitted, therefore, to the candour of this author, whether in his laudable zeal for the promotion of the Christian cause, the description which he has given of the present clergy of our church be not too strong: whether, taking them as a body, (and all judgments drawn from individuals, when generally applied, are most liable to error) “the actual principles of the clergy of the establishment can be said to be extremely different from those which it professes.”* Whether, when there are so many striking testimonies to the contrary to be produced from the writings of modern divines, it can be said with truth, that “the peculiar doctrines of Christianity have almost altogether vanished from their view;”† and that the sermons in our churches contain no other traces of these peculiarities, either *directly* or *indirectly*, save what may be derived from the ordinary form with which they conclude; which, in the author’s words, may “just serve to protect them from falling into entire oblivion.”‡

“Is there then no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” Jer. viii. 22. “Are all the pas-

* WILBERFORCE’S Practical View, p. 408.

† Ibid. p. 383.

‡ Ibid. p. 384.

tors become brutish, neglecting to seek the LORD; and is the judgment passed upon them, that therefore they shall not prosper, and that all their flocks shall be scattered?" Jer. x. 21. GOD forbid!

Had the foregoing description of the actual state of things in our church, fallen from the pen of a writer, of whose Christian character any doubt could be entertained, it might have been considered an intentional libel upon the clergy of the establishment. But seeing the writer in the light in which I wish to see him, it is regarded as the overflowing of an honest zeal, in a cause in which every Christian must be supposed to feel. And I shall only hope, for the credit of my brethren, that the drawer of the above picture will, upon a further acquaintance with them, judge it to be considerably overcharged.

The fatal consequences attendant upon the extinction of vital Christianity, cannot be contemplated but with the greatest concern; because the Christian religion provides the best security for man's happiness in every stage of his existence, having "the promise of the life that now is, not less than of that which is to come." Taking the subject, therefore, in no higher point of view, a regard to our *political* welfare must lead every thinking mind seriously to deprecate the

decline of a cause, without the powerful assistance of which, man, though living in civilized society, can scarcely be considered as far removed from his wild state of nature.

Whilst, then, I would cordially join in bearing the most public testimony against that lukewarmness in the cause of CHRIST, that indifference, and even daring contempt for religion, which characterise the present age; and whilst I admit, as in truth I must, that some of our clergy do not feel that interest for the Christian cause, which they ought to feel; and by their injudicious conformity to the manners of a dissipated age, lessen that influence which their sacred profession ought to have in the world; I still am inclined to think, that, taken as a body, they are more wanting in *zeal* than in *knowledge*. But upon this subject, did I feel disposed, it would not well become me, sensible as I am of my own manifold defects, to enlarge.

Disallowing, however, the charge against the clergy in the extent in which it is brought, I still feel so strongly what the cause of genuine Christianity owes to the character and abilities of this author, as to give him full credit for the sincerity of his intention. At the same time it may be suggested to his

consideration, whether a description of the actual state of our church, as destitute of the vital spirit of Christianity, in consequence of the genuine principles of it not being inculcated by its pastors, who, in their collective character, are represented as “having forsaken the fountain of living water, and hewed them out cisterns, which can hold no water;” be not a description, in the present day, when establishments possess such little hold upon the human mind, which may do harm, by putting an idea into the minds of inconsiderate people, not easy to be eradicated; and thereby preventing the clergy from doing that good, which the majority of them, I trust, are still disposed to do.

For it may be asked, to what such a description of the insufficiency of our clergy (derived more from the indecent revilings of irregular preachers, than from fact;) must lead, when accompanied with that notorious ignorance of the nature of the Christian church, which now universally prevails; but to a more general separation from its communion, than we now deplore? And in proportion as this event takes place, we know, from past experience, how to calculate the consequence. In proportion as the body of the community separate from the established church,

the establishment itself is weakened; because every separatist becomes, upon principle, an enemy to it. And should this enmity, by a continued addition to its cause, proceed so far as to effect its subversion, we need no prophet to inform us, that our inestimable liturgy, to which, as to the most spiritual production of the human mind, we now look up with reverence, will not be suffered to survive the ruin.

“By all who are studious of their country’s welfare, more particularly by all who desire to support our ecclesiastical establishment, every effort should be used to revive the Christianity of our better days.”* Upon the revival of primitive Christianity, there can be no dissenting opinion among those who have duly considered the influence which religion has upon society; which may be regarded as the key-stone of the arch which bears up the weight of all human government. But though the support of an ecclesiastical establishment, as our author has observed, depends in a great measure upon its possession of public opinion, it must, nevertheless, be remarked, that the truth and excellence of Christianity become no certain security for the possession of that opinion. We know that the church was in its purest condition,

* WILBERFORCE’S Practical View, p. 419.

when public opinion, or the judgment of the state, was decidedly against it. We also know, that when the establishment of the church was lost in this country, that loss was not to be attributed to a decay of Christianity in it, so much as to some other notorious causes. From whence we are authorised to conclude, that the existence of vital Christianity in the church, furnishing no security for the possession of public opinion; the loss of that opinion can become no sure criterion, by which to form a judgment of its actual corruption. Although, therefore, the loss of that establishment which the church now enjoys in this country, may, in the judgment of God, be the consequence of the degeneracy of its clergy; and in this light their character must become a subject of interesting concern with every well-wisher to the constitution; yet as this event has been, and consequently may be, brought about by *other* causes, it were to be wished that the popular publication alluded to had provided some antidote against *their prevalent effect*.

With this view, I could have wished to **have seen** the church described in its state of independence upon every human establishment; vested with those spiritual powers which it possesses in itself; in the exercise of which, every individual ought to be go-

verned by the authority, from which alone those powers are derived. This representation might, in some degree, have tended to counteract that loose way of thinking, which prevails upon this subject; which has sent so many unauthorised, and, for the most part, it is to be feared, unqualified, individuals into the ministry; an evil, which, if it go on increasing in the degree it has lately done, threatens more certain ruin to the establishment of this country, than is, in my judgment, to be apprehended from any other cause.

What opinion the author in question may have formed upon the nature and constitution of the Christian church, it is not for me to determine. But that there is no part of his publication calculated to give the reader any discriminate idea upon this important subject, will not be deemed an hazardous assertion. There are some passages, on the contrary, which, if I mistake not, may lead to an erroneous conclusion upon it.

In page 379, BAXTER is classed with HALL, BEVERIDGE, HOOKER, and ANDREWS, as “among the brightest ornaments and pillars of the church of England.”*

* WILBERFORCE'S Practical View, p. 379.

Whatever respect may be entertained for the character of BAXTER, as a strenuous maintainer of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, (and in that character he is doubtless entitled to respect) nothing, it is presumed, can be said in favour either of his political principles, or his bigoted prejudices against the church of England; of which not one of those venerable persons above-mentioned would, I conceive, have admitted him to have been a *pillar*, or an *ornament*. In fact, when BAXTER flourished, the church in this country, according to the idea here formed of it, was in a notorious state of persecution. The religion which at that time enjoyed the national support, was the religion of *non-conformists*; of those who, having separated from the church, destroyed its government, plundered, and in many cases murdered, its ministers. The church establishment, therefore, at that time, if we pass over the impropriety of the term, was of a piece with that of the state; it was an usurpation of rights, of which the legal possessors had been forcibly deprived.

What our author says, therefore, in a note, (pages 379 and 380) that “ BAXTER with his brethren were *shamefully ejected* from the church in 1666, in *violation of the royal word*, as well as of the *clear*

principles of justice," is what will not be readily admitted by those who are acquainted with the history of the times, or the state of facts.

The clear principles of justice require, that the parties who have suffered injury, should receive the earliest possible redress. Had these principles prevailed at the Restoration, the ejection of non-conformist ministers from the patrimony of the church, in favour of the episcopal clergy, to whom the rightful possession belonged must have been the immediate consequence of the re-establishment of the constitution. But so far was this from being the case, that two years were suffered to elapse, before any legal methods were taken to dispossess them. To the credit of the then government, such respect was entertained for the spiritual characters and abilities of many of the then ministers, that all the means of argument and persuasion were made use of to retain them in the church. And it was not till a determined perseverance in their prejudices against the form and government of the church, as it was then re-established, rendered hopeless all accommodation upon the subject, that their rejection was suffered finally to take place. So that instead of saying, they "*were shamefully ejected from the church in 1666, in violation of*

the clear principles of justice," it should be said, that these ministers ejected themselves, because they would not continue in the church upon any other condition, than that of its being fashioned after their own model.

Nor does the charge respecting the violation of the royal word, upon this occasion, appear to be strictly justified by facts.

When a person does every thing that possibly can be done in his situation, towards the fulfilment of any promise, he ought not, in charity, to be made chargeable with its violation.

The King, in his declaration at Breda, promised liberty to tender consciences; and that no man should be disquieted, or called in question, for difference of opinion in matters of religion, which did not disturb the peace of the kingdom; and that he would consent to such an Act of Parliament, as, upon mature deliberation, should be offered to him for the full granting that indulgence. When the non-conformist divines afterwards waited on the King at the Hague, he told them, that he referred the settling all differences respecting religion to the wisdom of Parliament; that the two Houses were the best judges what indulgence, or toleration, were necessary for the repose of the kingdom. The King, therefore, by concurring

with his Parliament in this business, acted up to the full meaning of his declarations. But he did more than this. So disposed was he to do every thing to gratify the non-conformists, that could be done consistent with there-establishment of the episcopal church, that he even acted without his Parliament upon this occasion; by publishing, with the advice of his Privy Council *only*, a declaration of indulgence in their favour; which the pressing and repeated remonstrance of the Commons obliged him afterwards to recal.

Though the King did therefore, immediately on his restoration, promise, that non-conformist ministers should not be ejected from sequestered livings, where the episcopal incumbents were dead; in consequence of which many remained in quiet possession of their preferments; yet this promise cannot be said to have been violated, because the Act of Uniformity, which passed two years after, obliged those who still retained their prejudices against the form and government of the church, to retire out of it. And when it is considered upon what ground this Act was brought forward; that it was judged necessary, in consequence of the non-conformist divines returning to their old seditious practice of inveighing against Government; and taking advantage of their public office, to bring

the minds of the people back to those fatal errors, which had already proved so destructive; the passing it may be considered, not so much a breach of promise on the part of the King, as an act of prudential provision for public peace on the part of the Government.

That such was the case, may be concluded from the speech which the Chancellor made at the opening of the Parliament by which this Act was passed; when speaking of the seditious preachers of the day, he says, “that instead of repenting of any thing they had done amiss, they repeated every day the same crimes, for the oblivion whereof the Act of Indemnity was passed. These (says he) are the seditious preachers who cannot be contented to be dispensed with for their full obedience to some laws established, without reproaching and inveighing against those laws how established soever; who tell their auditories, that the Apostle meant, when he bid them stand to their liberties, that they should stand to their arms; and who, by repeating the very expressions, and teaching the very doctrines they set on foot in the year 1640, sufficiently declare, that they have no mind that twenty years should put an end to the miseries we have undergone. What good Christian can think without horror of these ministers of the Gospel, who by their

function should be messengers of peace, and are in their practice the only trumpets of war, and incendiaries towards rebellion. And if the person and place can improve and aggravate the offence, as no doubt it does before GOD and men, methinks the preaching rebellion and treason out of the pulpit should be as much worse than the advancing it in the market, as poisoning a man at the communion, would be worse than killing him at a tavern."

It is not in charity to be supposed, that this account applied to the non-conformist ministers in general. In this case, as in most others, it is probable, some few hot-headed imprudent individuals brought disgrace upon the body. It is a circumstance to be lamented, therefore, by all serious Christians, that an Act should be deemed necessary, which operated to the exclusion of so many pious and learned men from the church, as were doubtless to be found in the number of those, whose prejudices would not permit them to continue in communion with it.

But of all the non-conformist ministers ejected, BAXTER appears to have had the least cause for complaint. He had distinguished himself as a strenuous supporter of the republican cause. He had even boasted of his exploits against the king. In the

editions of his “Saints everlasting Rest,” printed in the years 1649 and 1652, he translated some of the regicides and other rebels, whom he has named, into heaven;* which he describes, in compliment to the then ruling power, in the form of a *parliament*; calling it *parliamentum beatum*; though in the edition of this book printed in the year 1660 he thought it prudent to drop his saints out of heaven again. This CANONIZER OF REBEL SAINTS was, immediately upon the Restoration, made king’s chaplain; and soon after tempted to remain in the church, by the offer of the bishoprick of Hereford, which he rejected. And it was owing in a great degree to his invincible prejudices against the episcopal church as then established, that all attempts at accommodation between the church and dissenting divines were rendered fruitless. Bishop MORLEY, who was one of the chief managers of the episcopal cause, complained of the frivolous and false manner of arguing made use of by BAXTER on the occasion; that the sceptical length to which he carried his objections against ecclesiastical institutions, took away all legislative power, not only from church and state, but even from GOD himself.

* BAXTER’S “Saints everlasting Rest.” Edit. 1649; p. 82, 83; where he names several of the rebels and regicides, as BROOK, PYM, HAMPDEN, and WHITE, who was one of the regicides, &c.

The representation, therefore, which our author has given of the cause of the non-conformist ministers, who, he says, “ were shamefully ejected from the church, in violation of the royal word, and the clear principles of justice,” appears calculated to dispose the unwary reader to give more credit to that cause than it really deserved; and not to do that justice to the opposite one, to which it was certainly entitled.

It was upon the same unsound ground, that CALAMY, in his life of BAXTER, attempted to prejudice the public mind in favour of his dissenting brethren, by a representation of their extraordinary sufferings; to which we are indebted for a book* by WALKER, which will enable every impartial mind to hold the scale of judgment between the case of the persecuted clergy of the church of England, who suffered for the royal cause, and that of the ejected non-conformist divines, the principal supporters of the opposite party; and determine for himself on which side the balance of justice and charity evidently turns.

There is no pleasure in calling to mind circumstances, which, it were to be wished, had never found a place in the English history. But as there is

* WALKER's Sufferings of the Clergy.

always some danger attendant upon giving wrong names to either things or persons, I have thought it necessary to say something in answer to the note here objected to. By the learned reader, should such an one honour these papers with a perusal, that may be passed over, which to a less informed one may be useful.

Had the author to whom I allude, represented *BAXTER* and his ejected brethren in their character of pious and learned ministers, the Christian reader would have readily subscribed to the position; and in common with every well-wisher to the cause of religion, have lamented the existence of those unhappy prejudices which deprived the church of their ministerial labours. But when these non-conformist ministers are represented as *ornaments* and *pillars* of the *church of England*, such a confusion of ideas respecting the Christian church are introduced, that we feel ourselves obliged to call them,—what *HALL*, *BEVERIDGE*, *HOOKE*, *ANDREWS*, and every writer properly informed upon that subject must have called them,—separatists from that branch of the church of *CHRIST*, established in this country; and consequently *schismatics*.

Should any additional authority be wanting to confirm this position, it may be taken from the opi-

nion of those, who may be considered as impartial by-standers, during the time that the points in dispute between the episcopal clergy and non-conformist ministers were in agitation.

The Bishop of London, many years after the Restoration, in the charitable hope of bringing back the dissenting ministers into the bosom of the church, wrote to several of the then most eminent divines of the foreign protestant churches, to obtain their judgment of the controversy subsisting between the non-conformists and the church of England. The answer of all was decisive in favour of the church of England. But that which was received from the celebrated Monsieur CLAUDE, beside the general good sense which it contains, speaks so fully to the point before us, that the insertion of it will be pardoned by the reader, upon the consideration of its leading to a decisive conclusion upon this subject.

“ I could wish (said he, alluding to the independents) that those who fly out so far, as to think of nothing less than coming to an absolute rupture, and throwing off all dependence and subordination, in order to give every particular congregation a sort of sovereign government; I could wish these people would thoroughly consider, whether their scheme be

not a direct contradiction to the spirit of Christianity, which is a spirit of union and social correspondence, and not of division. That they would consider, that though the principle of the reformed churches will by no means suffer men should have dominion over their faith, and govern the conscience at discretion; and that such arbitrary and implicit methods are destructive to religion; that notwithstanding this, it does by no means follow, that it is lawful for Christians to take check at discipline, to throw off the yoke of government, and deprive themselves of those assistances which are the consequences of general union; and that such a subordination in the parts of this spiritual society is very serviceable to secure orthodox belief, and regular practice. And lastly, I desire they would consider, that the same reason which makes them insist upon the independence of one congregation upon another, will carry them much further than they desire; and may be made use of to break the union of particular congregations, and make every single person independent of each other. For one congregation has no more right to claim an independency of other congregations, than one single person has to set up himself independent of others in the same congregation. This principle, therefore, must of neces-

sity destroy all discipline; throw the church, as far as in us lies, into a horrible confusion; and expose the heritage of our LORD to the reproach of the adversaries.

“As for those among you,” continues this celebrated writer, “who are called Presbyterians; though, I persuade myself, they are not unfurnished with knowledge, judgment, and zeal, yet I could wish, with all my heart, they had shewn more temper in resenting the scandal, they fancy has formerly been given by the bishops; and that they had distinguished the order from the men. Persons in public stations are not only liable to miscarriage, but it may happen that the most holy and considerable functions are sometimes managed by ill people; and in this case, both reason and religion will tell us, that the minister and the employment ought not to be intermixt and thrown together. And since at present, by the blessing of GOD, there is no such pretence for disgust, and that my lords the bishops are remarkable for their piety, their zeal, and constancy to their religion; I hope the advantage of their example will have a good effect upon the generality, compose the minds of those formerly disaffected, and sweeten their disposition. Besides, the Dissenters should please to

consider, that if the episcopal government be attended with some inconveniences, as I do not question but it may be; so on the other side, the Presbyterian constitution is not without very great disadvantages. No order or function, where mortal men have the management of it, is exempt from inconveniences. *Equality* among the ministry is subject to blemishes and excesses, no less than *superiority*. The safest and most prudent conduct, therefore, is not to run from one settlement to another, nor to hazard the shaking the whole frame in hopes of a better constitution, though we had both authority and power to make such an experiment. Prudence, justice, and Christian charity, will by no means give us leave to push the point thus far, and venture on such dangerous extremities, only for a different form of government. The best expedient is to endeavour the drawing towards a temper, and lessen as much as may be, the inconveniencies we are afraid of, and not to have recourse to violent remedies. My Lord, I make no scruple to call the setting up private meetings, declining the public congregations, and withdrawing themselves from your lordship's government, violent remedies. Such practice is apparently no better than a *formal schism*; a crime in its own nature

hateful to God and men; and for which both those who set it up, and those who encourage it, must expect to give an account at the great day."

There is still one remaining passage in the publication before me, to which, as it puts the unity of the Christian church quite out of sight, I think it necessary to say a few words.

Among the concluding hints which this author gives for the practical direction of true Christians, we find the following one; which, from the liberal and philanthropic spirit that it breathes, is well calculated to gain credit in a world, uninstructed, as the present is, upon the subject to which it belongs. "Let true Christians," says our author, "cultivate a Catholic spirit of universal good-will, and of amicable fellowship towards all those, of whatever sect or denomination, who, differing from them in *non-essentials*, agree with them in the grand fundamentals of religion."

The good contained in this sentence appears in so questionable a shape, that an apprehension of the evil which may be derived from it by the uninformed Christian, leads me to conclude, that the author could not see it, in the light in which it will be seen by many readers. Whilst, therefore, I honour the general

sentiment, I must beg leave to state my objections to the wording of some part of it, when considered as drawing out a line of practical conduct for the Christian.

There is no fallacy by which common understandings are so readily imposed upon, as that by which a proposition of acknowledged truth in its proper and restrained sense is made to minister to a general and unlimited conclusion. In questions of nice discrimination, the far greater part of mankind, "whose senses are not exercised to discern between good and evil," Heb. v. 14, are not possessed of ability sufficient to qualify them to draw the line between what is and what is not to be admitted. Propositions which bring immediate conviction to the mind, from the evident truth contained in them, are readily embraced; whilst at the same time little or no attention is paid to the limitations by which those self-evident propositions are necessarily bounded. Hence it is, that a confusion of judgment, upon the most important subjects, oftentimes prevails in the minds of uninformed people, unfavourable to the cause of truth: when the admission of one proposition in an *unlimited* sense comprehends under it the rejection of another, which stands upon an equally firm foundation. In this case, they either determine upon a wrong conclusion, which

necessarily leads to error; or in consequence of their remaining poised between two apparently opposite positions, which they know not how to reconcile, they are in that state of uncertainty which leads to no conclusion at all.

In proportion, therefore, to the importance of the subject, should be the attention paid to the precise boundaries, within which every position, however incontrovertible in itself, ought to be confined; that no opening may be left for a general conclusion to be drawn, to the proper establishment of which other circumstances may be necessary to be taken into the account.

The proposition here alluded to is that by which a reader may be led to conclude, that provided the faith of the Christian be sound, provided he hold the grand fundamentals of religion, other considerations are not subjects of essential importance to him.

Upon what is to be understood by the *grand fundamentals* of religion there is no question. Where these are not admitted, there can be no Christianity. This is a position in which all who receive the Gospel must agree. But though there can be no Christianity, where the grand fundamentals of religion are not admitted, it does not follow, that where these are

admitted, there remains no other subject of essential importance, to which the Christian need pay attention.

It may be asked, is every thing relating to the church of CHRIST to be deemed *non-essential*, save what respects the profession of its peculiar doctrines? Such a conclusion, it is presumed, will lead the Christian reader further than the author meant. For upon this supposition, that every thing but the grand fundamentals of religion is a matter of no essential importance; the conclusion which the generality of readers will draw from the sentence under consideration will be this; that provided *they believe* what as Christians they must believe, it is a matter of no consequence what form of religious worship they adopt; whether they hold communion *with the church*, or the *meeting-house*; in other words, whether they assemble as members of the church of CHRIST, or as members of a schismatic congregation.

The admission of this idea cuts up by the roots the unity of the Christian church; and makes what the Apostles and first Christians wrote upon this subject something worse than nonsense; for in this case they imposed on their fellow-Christians, by making matters in themselves *indifferent* subjects of very important consideration.

In short, this inter-communion (if we may so say) between the church and the conventicle, so utterly inconsistent with the regular œconomy of Divine grace, can never lead to good. It must ultimately destroy the cause it is meant to serve. To point out its danger, we have only to ask, whether it be not possible for Christians to profess the true faith, and yet by *disobedience* to lose all the benefits expected from it? If so, there is, doubtless, something of *essential* importance with the Christian, besides the acknowledgment of the fundamentals of Christianity.

KORAH and his company were swallowed up, not for any error in faith, but for disobedience of practice; not because they disbelieved any of the established doctrines of the Jewish church, but because they rebelled against the Divine ordinance in its establishment.

It was not for their renunciation of the faith, but for their separation from the church, that ST. PAUL, ST. CLEMENT, and ST. IGNATIUS, in their addresses to the primitive Christians, expressed themselves so strongly and decidedly upon the subject of ecclesiastical unity; that it is impossible, one should suppose, for an unprejudiced reader of their writings, to harbour a doubt upon this subject.

Upon what ground, then, are we to conclude, that conformity to the established government of the church, which in the primitive days constituted a subject of the first magnitude, is now dwindled down into an unimportant consideration? Can any thing which has received the sanction of the Divine institution in religion be deemed a *non-essential*? Can, for instance, the Divine institution of the Christian church become at any time a matter of *no importance*? Can the rule given by the Apostle to the members of that church, in consequence of its Divine establishment, respecting their obedience and submission to the spiritual authority of their appointed governors,* become a matter of indifference to the professors of CHRIST's religion? Can the cultivation of Christian charity, that bond of perfectness, as it is called; that Christian grace, which the establishment of the church was in a particular manner designed to promote among men; in speaking of religious practice, can this be deemed a *non-essential*?

Our author, it will be urged, means no such thing. It shall be readily allowed that he does not. On the contrary, that he directs true Christians “to cultivate

* HEB. xiii. 17.

a Catholic spirit of universal good-will and amicable fellowship towards all, of whatever sect or denomination," &c.

Had we no experience in human affairs, did we know nothing of the corrupt creature man, we should pay attention to a direction so well calculated to harmonize a jarring world. But as man is, it is a direction irreducible to practice upon any plan, but that which has been laid down by God for the purpose. God knew what was in man. He knew that what ought to be the strongest cement of affection and brotherly kindness, would, through the corruption of his nature, be made the ground of animosity, hatred, and revenge. He saw, when on earth, in the case of the Samaritans, a striking instance of the fatal effect produced by a difference of opinion in religious matters upon the harmony of society. The remedy which he provided against it was the institution of a church, in which all mankind should be brought together "in the unity of the same spirit, to worship the same God in the bond of peace."

Such is the idea so strongly inculcated by the Apostle, in his epistle to the Romans; where he directs the members of the church "to follow after the things which make for peace, and things where-

with one may edify another.”* “Now the God of patience and consolation,” says he, “grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to the will of JESUS CHRIST, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God the Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.”† “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body.”‡

The peace prescribed to Christians, and intended as a blessing to them, is here described by the Apostle as the end of their vocation, and of their being united *into one body*. If then the end of Christians being united *into one body, the church*, be the production of peace among them; the most probable consequence of their being broken into sects and parties will be the destruction of it. Had it not been for the sake of peace and love, and the great blessings which attend them, God might have let Christians live in different bodies, as well as in one; and exercise their religion in opposite churches, as well as in churches agreeing in the same communion. But the reason why He hath enjoined Christians to unite into one body and communion, was to put them into a blessed state of

* ROM. xiv. 17.

† Ibid. xv. 5, 6.

‡ COL. iii. 15.

Catholic peace and love; for promoting the happiness of mankind, and the honour of his holy name. Could this perfection of Christianity have been brought about in any other way; to use our author's words, could the fundamentals of religion have been preserved in the world, and "a Catholic spirit of universal good-will, and amicable fellowship," have been kept alive among men in any other way, than by their joint communion in religious worship; it is probable, that the institution of the Christian church, as a society under an appropriate government, had never taken place.

To talk, therefore, of nothing being of *essential* consideration with the Christian disciple, but the profession of the true faith, is to propagate a doctrine, as unknown to the church of CHRIST, as it is contradicted by the experience of the world. For conformity to the appointed government of the church is not only a matter of importance to the Christian, as it is an obedience to the Divine will; but it is moreover a subject necessary to be attended to by him, upon the very ground pointed out by our author; because it essentially contributes to the promotion and preservation of those very objects which he has particularly in view. "The church," the Apostle tells

us, “ is the ground and pillar of the truth.”* One of the ends of its institution was, that, by establishing a standard of judgment in religious matters, it might be the guardian and preserver of the Christian faith; that Christians might “ not be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love, they might grow up into him, in all things, which is the head, even CHRIST: From whom the whole body (of the church) fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.”† And experience, as it has been above observed, has abundantly convinced us, that corruptions of the faith among Christians are, sooner or later, the consequences of their separation from this body thus *fitly framed*.

* “ Quibus verbis significat PAULUS, ne intercidat veritas DEI in mundo, ecclesiam esse fidam ejus custodem: quia ejus ministerio et operâ voluit DEUS puram verbi sui prædicationem conservari et se nobis ostendere patrem familiâs, dum nos spiritualibus alimentis pascit, et quæcunque ad salutem nostram faciunt, procurat.”

CALV. Inst. l. iv. c. 1.

† Ephes. iv. 14, 15.

The unity of the church, therefore, as instrumental in preserving the grand fundamentals of Christianity in the world, must on that account be a subject of *essential* importance to the Christian.

It must also be seen in the same light, when we regard its direct tendency to produce that Catholic spirit of good-will, which constitutes the great blessing of society, and which will in vain be expected from any other cause.

“ I know,” says a learned writer,* than whom no one was better acquainted with the subject before us, “ that men will now say, that they can love all parties, and that they can live without animosities towards all sorts of men; but if a few men can be so perfect, what is that to the generality of mankind, who will still be divided in affections as they are in parties and communions; as has been found by woeful experience, not only in this church, but all the churches where divisions have been since the time of CHRIST. Wherefore, generally speaking, it must needs follow, that opposition in communions will breed partiality and opposition in affections among Christians. Where particular persons, or congregations, separate from any church as corrupt, there must needs be bitter

* HICKES'S Posthumous Sermons.

strife and envyings between that church who will justify herself, and the separatists who will maintain their separation; and in such contentions for the truth, Christian charity and discipline will decay, and utter licentiousness and atheism and all manner of heresies will spring up. These are the reasons into which the precepts for unity, and the strictures against division in the Christian religion are resolved: and I am persuaded, were the benefits of the one, and the direful effects of the other, well considered, by those who hold opposite communions to this church, they would be as zealous for the positive precepts of Christian union, as for the most weighty duties of the moral law."

It may be remembered, that the Jews and Samaritans agreed in the essentials of religion. But the separation of the latter from the worship at Jerusalem, and the setting up distinct altars of their own, were circumstances which operated so strongly upon the minds of the respective parties, as effectually to destroy all social intercourse between them.

It may be remembered, also, that the two principal sects among the Jews (the Pharisees and Sadducees) were engaged in a kind of ceaseless hostility with each other, during the whole time of their existence. So irreconcilable was their mutual enmity, that they

chose rather to perish in their division, than to unite in opposition to their common foes.

If we come down to later times, the conduct of the Puritans towards each other after their emigration to America, together with the spirit of intolerance manifested by the contending sectaries in the last century, leads to a similar conclusion upon this subject. Whilst the railing accusations continually brought against the established clergy, together with the indecent language in these days so lavishly bestowed upon them, by those self-constituted teachers, who nevertheless profess themselves to be disciples of the same Master; will not allow us to hope for better things, than have heretofore been experienced from the uncontrolled passions of the natural man.

To lead men, therefore, to think, that a Catholic spirit of universal good-will and amicable fellowship, may be kept up among those of different sects and persuasions in religion, is to induce them to act upon an imaginary idea unsupported by facts; whilst they hold themselves indifferent to the plan which God has provided, for the certain attainment of that desirable object. Let us not fancy men to be more charitably disposed than they really are, and thereby flatter them into schism. Charity, be it remembered,

is the offspring, not of *nature*, but of *grace*. Let us, therefore, rather tell men what they are; and use our utmost endeavours to persuade them to make use of the means calculated to make them what they ought to be. The unity of the Christian church will as certainly lead to a Catholic spirit of good-will and amicable fellowship, as does the division of it to the opposite disposition. To imagine that this characteristic of true Christianity, will be found among men left to the guidance of their own fancies and passions in religion, is to be wise above what is written; is to forsake the paths of truth and knowledge, and flatter ourselves that we shall find comfort in those of confusion and error.

Whilst, therefore, it is impossible but to look up with respect to the author before me, I nevertheless must think, that the effectual advancement of Christianity, and the consequent security of its benefits to the world, will ever depend upon a conformity to the plan laid down by God for that purpose. Consequently, the more attention is paid to the unity of the Christian church, considered as a society of Divine institution, the more of true Christian faith and charity will be found in the world.

Upon this ground I would suggest it to the consideration of those members of the church to whom I now address myself, who regard the establishment of the church in this country as an object of great national importance; whether, by their occasional attendance upon irregular teachers, who hold themselves independent of it, they would wish to become instrumental to the destruction of the cause they profess to have at heart. Whether they are not actually placing themselves in that predicament, when, by their influence and example, they convey an idea into the minds of the people, absolutely destructive of one great end of the Divine institution of a church, by leading them to conclude, that it is a matter of no consequence whether they continue in communion with it or not. I would entreat them by the love of CHRIST to consider, whether the doctrine which they may hear out of the church, will balance against what they lose by their separation from it? Putting the nature of the Christian ministry, as a commission, out of the question; whether the partial good that may be done by a certain individual, to whose ministry they have attached themselves, in consequence of the good opinion to which his character may have entitled him, will compensate to the community for

the general evil derived from that violation of order, which, in the appointment to a most important office, removes the line of distinction necessary to be drawn between the *real* and *imaginary* qualifications of different parties. For is it not more than probable, that the evil, in this case, will be found to outweigh the good, in the proportion that vain pretenders to knowledge exceed in number those who really possess it?

But upon the consideration that all order in this matter proceeds from GOD, (the Apostle having told us, in reference to the priesthood, “ that no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of GOD, as was Aaron,” Heb. v. 4.; and that, as man, JESUS CHRIST himself proceeded in the discharge of the Christian priesthood by commission;) I would conjure them, by the obedience which they owe to the Head of the church, to consider, whether their disregard of an establishment calculated to promote peace and unity among Christians, may not provoke GOD to deprive them of a blessing which they thus appear to undervalue. Whether this taking the cause, as it were, into their own hand, and upon the ground of occasional defect in the ministers of the church, running into an open breach of order in contempt of a Divine institution, be so likely a way

to correct the evil complained of, as leaving the cause in GOD's hand, continuing dutiful members of his church, praying for its ministers, and by conversation, writing, and example, endeavouring to re-animate them to a more spiritual discharge of their trust.*

“It is safest” (says an old writer) “to trust GOD with his own causes. If AARON had been chosen by *Israel*, MOSES would have sheltered him under *their* authority. Now that GOD did immediately appoint him, his patronage is sought, whose the election was. We may easily err in the managing of Divine affairs, and so our want of success cannot want sin. GOD knows how to use, how to bless his own means.”

It should be remembered, then, that there is no excuse for separating from a church, where the word of GOD is preached, and the sacraments duly admi-

* “Cogitent in magnâ multitudine complures esse verè sanctos et innocentes coram oculis DOMINI, qui aspectum suum fugiant. Cogitent, et ex iis qui morbidî videntur, multos esse, qui in vitiis suis nequaquam sibi placent aut blandiuntur; sed serio timore DOMINI identidem expergefacti, ad integritatem majorem adspirant. Cogitent non ferendum esse de homine judicium ab uno facto; quando sanctissimi interdum gravissimo casu excidunt. Cogitent plus subesse ad colligendam ecclesiam momenti, tum verbi ministerio, tum sacrorum mysteriorum participatione, quam ut quorundam impiorum culpâ, vis illa tota evanescere queat. Postremò reputent, in censendâ ecclesiâ pluris esse *divinum* quam *humanum* judicium.”

CALV. Instit. lib. iv. c. i.

ministered; because, as it has been above observed, the efficacy of the service and sacraments of the church does not depend upon the private character of the officiating minister: and as there is no excuse for separation under such circumstances, so neither can there be any advantage derived from it. Piously-disposed persons may certainly be as pious in the church as they can be out of it; and it is the design of our church, that all its members should be such. It may be a subject, therefore, well worth consideration, whether the practice so frequently adopted by serious persons, of separating from a church which furnishes the most effectual means of promoting the true spirit of Christianity, may not be traced to the artifice of that grand Deceiver, whose business it is at all times and by all means to prevent, as much as in him lies, the success of the Christian ministry: and, under this head, whether the idea which is now taken up by Christians of a certain description, relative to a supposed distinction between the *church of CHRIST* and *church of England*, be not employed by him, by way of prelude to their more easy separation from church communion. Upon those pious persons who are on the point of being led captive by such a fatal delusion, the strong language of Bishop HALL will

produce more effects, at the same time that it will be better received, than any thing I can hope to say upon the subject. “The God of the church (says this pious bishop) cannot abide either conventicles of separation, or pluralities of professions. This flourishing church of Great-Britain (after all the spiteful calumniations of malicious men) is one of the most conspicuous members of the Catholic church upon earth; so we, in her communion, do make up one body with the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and faithful Christians of all ages and times. We succeed in their faith, we glory in their succession, we triumph in this glory. Whither go ye, then, ye weak, ignorant, seduced souls, that run to seek this dove in a foreign cote? She is here, if she have any rest under heaven.” Serm. on Cant. vi. 9.

To the foregoing important considerations, let it be added, that every representation of the clergy of this church, which tends to lessen their influence upon the community, does injury to the general cause. For this reason, it becomes necessary to separate, as far as may be, the office from the man; and not to disregard the ordinance of God, because it has been occasionally disgraced. And this dis-

tion between the public and private character of the teacher, our SAVIOUR has taught us to make, in the direction given to his disciples respecting their conduct towards the Scribes and Pharisees, who were at that time notorious for moral depravity. "The Scribes and Pharisees (said he) sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." MATT. xxiii. 2, 3. Though the ministers of the church, therefore, ought to be, and would to GOD they all were, burning and shining lights to the world; yet it must be remembered, they are men. "They have received this treasure in earthen vessels," as men of like passions with those to whom they are sent. As men, therefore, they will have their personal defects. But as their personal defects do not, through Divine grace, vacate the object of their commission, "any thing (according to the observation made by DIONYSIUS to NOVATIAN*) must rather be borne, than that we should rend the church of GOD." A proper distinction, therefore, should always be made between the clergy and the church. For if well-meaning pious

* "Oportebat quidem nihil non ferre, ne ecclesiam DEI scinderes." DION. Epist. ad NOVAT. vide EUSEB. lib. viii. c. 44.

Christians are to leave the church, because there are some ministers who do no credit to their office in it; it may be difficult to say, when such a thing as unity could be found in it; since there never was a time, from the days of the Apostles, when such a cause for separation did not in a greater or less degree exist.

ST. CYPRIAN sets forth the corruption of an early age of the church in the following melancholy strain: "The discipline (says he) which the Apostles left us, was corrupted with idleness and a long rest. Every one's care was to increase his estate; and quite forgetting either what the believers had done in the Apostles' days, or what it was always their duty to do, they gave themselves up to an insatiable covetousness, and laboured for nothing but to get wealth. There was no devotion in their priests, no charity shewed in good works, not so much as the form of godliness in their behaviour." Yet ST. CYPRIAN was so far from thinking that this shameful degeneracy of the clergy furnished an argument for separation from the church, that he was one of the strongest advocates for the preservation of Christian unity.

When the prophet said, (MAL. ii. 7) "The lips of the priests should keep knowledge, and they

should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of Hosts;" it was at a time, when the Jewish church was in the most degenerate state; when the priests, as he afterwards tells them, "had departed out of the way, had caused many to stumble at the law, and had corrupted the covenant of LEVI."

The reader will not suppose, that it is our wish to shelter the present degeneracy of the clergy under that of their predecessors in any former stage of the church. The only conclusion meant to be drawn from the foregoing circumstances is simply this; that the ministers of the church are to be regarded in their public character, as "the messengers of the LORD of Hosts," "the ambassadors for CHRIST;" as bearing a commission, which, though at times unworthily discharged, demands consideration from the respect due to the Being from whom it is derived; and that the cause of the master ought not to be affected by the unworthiness of the servant.*

* In the course of the great rebellion, when the people were deluded to believe they could not set up the kingdom of CHRIST without pulling down that of their sovereign; among other transactions, we are told of an officer belonging to the rebels, who, after some skirmish, being taken prisoner with his party by the royalists, was modestly asked by one of them, "How it came to pass, that a

Were this argument managed with skill equal to its importance, it would, with God's blessing upon it, put an end to all difference of opinion upon this subject. The errors into which many men have run in consequence of their ignorance of the nature of the Christian church; of their having considered it, not as a society *made for man*, but something left for man *to make for himself*; (like a lump of shapeless wax, to be moulded according to every one's fashion) would be corrected; and the object of that grand enemy of all religion, whose cause derives advantage from division among Christians, would be in a great measure defeated. Nothing is wanting to do justice to the cause of the church, as a society of CHRIST'S

gentleman of his seemingly good sense and education could be induced to engage in a cause so very unjust?" His reply was; "He had not so strictly examined the merit of the cause, as now he was convinced he ought; but one thing he could not but mention, that had prejudiced him (and he believed a great many more) against his Majesty's service, was the licence taken among the cavaliers of swearing and drinking." The answer to this was; "Admitting the charge were true, it was highly unpardonable so excellent a prince as his Majesty should suffer for the irregularities of his soldiers; and besides, he ought farther to have considered, the crimes he mentioned were entirely *personal*, and the vices of *men*: whereas the malice, treachery, hypocrisy, and several other unparalleled vices, which made up the very essence of *his* cause, were the vices of devils."

forming, but an unprejudiced mind, an honest heart, and a competent acquaintance with primitive Christianity. A *bright ornament** of our church, who possessed these qualifications in an eminent degree, has spoken so strongly and so plainly upon the subject to which I am now alluding, that every considerate man will at least pause before he ventures to set at nought such authority. “I would not (says he) be an heretick, or a schismatick in the church, to have the wisdom of SOLOMON, the tongues of ST. PAUL, and the eloquence of APOLLOS; no not to be caught up into Paradise, and hear those unutterable things. I would not be the best preacher that ever was, and speak in the pulpit by inspiration, to have that accusation lie against me, which ST. PAUL drew up against the Corinthians,—of envy, strife, schism.” Elsewhere speaking of those spiritual gifts, which, through the vanity of their possessors, heretofore disturbed the peace of the church of Corinth, he thus admirably expresses himself: “Gifts, (says he) whether *real* or *pretended*, whether natural, acquired, or inspired, are temptations to pride and apostacy, rather than security from them; witness LUCIFER in heaven; ADAM in paradise; and So-

LOMON, who for his exceeding wisdom was styled the wife. So that no comparison ought to be made betwixt the excellency of knowledge and grace, and betwixt the intellectual and saving gifts of the Spirit; or between the gifts of the Spirit that make us wise, and learned, and fluent talkers, and those which make us good.

“It is better to be humble, than to be a prophet; it is better to be righteous, than to have the faith of miracles; and it is better to be holy, than to have the gift of tongues. But, to be peaceable and love union, is as great a grace, as to be humble, righteous, and holy; nay, as to be pure and temperate. For it is equalled with all those, and many other of the prime graces in the New Testament; it is reckoned with many of them among the fruits of the Spirit; and the fruits of the Spirit are better and more desirable than the gifts of it. The gifts of it may improve the conformity of my soul after the *metaphysical* image of God, in knowledge and wisdom; which the apostate spirits retain. But these are the fruits of it; as love, joy, peaceableness, &c. which conform my soul after his moral image, and make me partaker of his moral excellencies and perfections, and which alone can qualify my spirit for his presence

and acceptance; when many inspired men, and many more enthusiasts who think themselves inspired, shall be shut out of the kingdom of GOD: as for other sins, so especially, for disturbing the peace, and rending the unity of the church.

“Wherefore, if we lived in the age of miracles; or if GOD, to confute the infidelity of atheists, or to convert the Mahometans, or for any other reasons, should now renew the gifts of his spirit; in submission to his good pleasure, I should beg, with the prophet JEREMIAH, to be excused from all intellectual inspirations, from visions and revelations, and prophecy; from the gift of tongues and discerning spirits, and preaching and praying by immediate inspiration. Instead of these gifts which fail, and which are good or bad, as the man is that receives them, I would beg him, for the sake of JESUS, to inspire me with the graces of his spirit, which never fail; with humility, temperance, purity, justice, and charity; for every one of these surpasseth all understanding, and the knowledge of all mysteries; more especially would I beseech him to grant me his peace, or inspire me with the love of union, which surpasseth all understanding, and would keep my heart and mind from

envyings and strife, and from making or fomenting needless divisions, through JESUS CHRIST my Lord.”

An attempt to add to the force of the above excellent passages, would be presumption. They are, therefore, left to produce their own effect upon the reader's mind, who, if unacquainted, as most probably he is, with the writings of *this great divine*, will thank me for producing thus at length a quotation from him, which breathes the true Christian spirit in so eminent a degree.

To prevent misconstruction, it remains only to be observed, that what a sincere regard for genuine Christianity, accompanied with an earnest wish to promote the unity of the Christian church, has induced me, in a former part of this discourse, to say, in apparent contradiction to a writer, who has lately favoured the world with his religious sentiments; must be considered, as said against the meaning, which may be drawn from certain unguarded passages in his publication, rather than against that of their author. So much respect is due to this amiable author for the design of his undertaking, that it would give me pleasure to think, that what has been here written, might prove the means of putting his publication into the hand of one additional reader;

because so much of good is contained in it, that the reader must be either good or bad in the extreme, who does not derive benefit from it.

Feeling with the Critic,* “ that an extra official exhortation to that renovation of mind which constitutes the characteristic of the true Christian, assisted by the credit of this author’s situation, the just and general confidence in the worth and sincerity of his character, the clearness of his intellect, and the force of his eloquence, will produce a more extensive, and on many minds a more powerful effect, than any instruction from the pulpit, or even from the pen of a divine;” I feel earnestly desirous of contributing to so important an object.

Before I conclude this postscript, however, I could wish (if it may be done without offence, and where no offence is meant, none should be taken) to recall to the particular attention of this respectable author some few considerations.

In his late publication he has pronounced a general condemnation upon the professional character of the Clergy of the established church. By wise and candid men, a general and indiscriminate condemnation will be seen in a light, in which this author, if we

* Brit. Critic, for Sept. 1797.

may judge of him from some parts of his work, would be very unwilling that his sentiments should appear. Considered, in its reference to the Clergy as a body, his sentence is certainly not less impolitic, than unjust. It is unjust, because unsupported by facts. It is impolitic, because it must prove detrimental to the constitution of this country; by alienating the minds of the community from that branch of it, which has always been regarded as its firmest support.

The utmost credit will be readily given to this author for his good intention. Upon this head I believe the opinion of the public is not less honourable than it is decided. But convinced, as I am, that the church of CHRIST has been ever an *Episcopal church*; and that a separation from its communion has been, what it always will be, the fruitful source of heresy* and uncharitableness, and consequently one of the greatest misfortunes that has ever happened to the Christian world; it is impossible to look with indifference upon that growing prevalence of *sectarianism*, which marks the character of the present day,

* “Inde schismata et hæreses oborta sunt et oriuntur, dum episcopus, qui unus est, et ecclesiæ præest superbâ quorumnam præsumptione, contemnitur: et homo dignatione DEI honoratus, indignus hominibus judicatur.” CYPRIAN. Epist. 69.

Our author would be considered to be a professed friend to our happy establishment. No one can feel more disposed to see him in that light than myself. At the same time, I trust, it will not be regarded as any intentional impeachment, either of his integrity or judgment, to remind him, that railing against the clergy of the establishment has been that preparatory step to subversion, which has been twice adopted with success by the subjects of Great-Britain. It may be unnecessary to add, that the Revolution of the last century in this kingdom, and that lately effected in our colonies, are the instances which I have in view.

It is not positively said, because I would not hastily pronounce sentence against the good sense of this nation; but he must be a very unprofitable spectator of what is going forward around him, who does not see reason to fear, that a conspiracy against our establishment is now in a state of rapid growth in this country.

But surely these are eventful times, in which no wise man will be forward in hazarding experiments. Allowing that reformation is wanting, (a subject, upon which, alas! there can be but one opinion) it is still a matter of *essential* consideration, in what manner that

reformation is to be effected. The disease of which we complain, so far at least as the clergy are concerned, is partial; such as, we trust, the vigour of a sound constitution will prevent from becoming desperate. But an ill-judged method of cure oftentimes brings death to a patient, not otherwise in danger.

If, upon the ground of the present supposed insufficiency of the clergy, (a fact which their enemies know themselves to be incapable of proving) communion with our church be no longer considered a matter of Christian obligation; and it be judged advisable, for the more effectual advancement of the Christian cause, to follow what may be deemed the sound of the Gospel, wherever heard, or by whomsoever delivered; we do not hesitate to say, that in such case the remedy will, in the end, prove worse than the disease; and that those well-meaning persons, who are perhaps most sanguine in its application, will eventually find that they have been only instruments in the hands of designing men for the accomplishment of purposes, which, could they foresee them, they might be among the last to promote. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Psalm xi. 3.

POSTSCRIPT *to the* CLERGY.

THE confideration of writing to my Brethren the Clergy on a fubject, with which every minifter of the church is, from his profeflion, fupposed to be acquainted, has more than once ftopped my pen. But circumftances and fituation may qualify one minifter to fpeak more fully upon fome particular fubject than another, without his laying claim to any general fuperiority in professional knowledge.

It having been the will of Divine Providence to fix my refidence in a place, which has given me continued opportunities of lamenting the effects produced by a feparation from the communion of the Chriftian church; it is to be expected, that my thoughts fhould occasionally have been employed upon this fubject. Such of my brethren as are placed in fimilar fituations, may perhaps be obliged to me for bringing into one collected point of view the refult of my reflections upon it.

And though the office assumed by me upon this occasion, is not more honourable than that of the Gibeonites, who were but hewers of wood and drawers of water for the service of the tabernacle; yet if, by collecting good and sound materials, I shall prove the instrument of conveying useful information upon a subject, now as little understood as it is generally neglected, I shall hope that the merit of the design will be suffered to atone for the imperfection of its execution.

To those who are advanced, and consequently (it may be supposed) well informed in their profession, these papers are not addressed; for to them nothing new can be said upon this subject; nothing that perhaps might not be better said by themselves. But to those of my brethren who are not in the same state of advancement; who are unpossessed of the leisure or advantages necessary to the proper study of their profession, it may be a convenience to have information, which has been derived from various quarters, placed before them in some regular and connected form. Without wishing to forestall their judgment, I feel myself justified in saying upon this occasion, that if I have been deceived in the subject before me, I have been deceived with what I considered to be

the best means of information in my hand, and the sincerest intention in my mind of promoting the Christian cause. Should the ground upon which I have trodden upon this occasion be deemed unsound, it appears to me, that there must be an end to all authority on subjects of this nature.

From the general tendency of the human mind to extremes, the blind credulity of one age often leads to unbounded scepticism in another. But the implicit faith of the monk, who, as the story goes, when SATAN would have drawn him into heresy, by asking him what he believed upon a certain point, answered, "*Id credo quod credit ecclesia;*" and to the subjoined question, "*Quod credit ecclesia,*" cautiously replied, "*Id quod ego credo;*" is not more contemptible than the profane licentiousness of a PAINE, who would make his senses the only standard of his belief.

We do not disclaim private judgment; much less do we admit the infallibility of the church. But if we have not discretion in these days to draw the line between an implicit obedience to authority, and an utter contempt of it, the experience of past ages seems to have been thrown away, and reason to have been given us for very little purpose.

“ Call no man your father upon earth; for one is your Father who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even CHRIST;”* is a text that has not unfrequently been strained beyond its original meaning. It was addressed by our SAVIOUR to his hearers, with the view of guarding them against the extravagant superiority assumed by the rabbies over the disciples, and the blind submission with which their doctrines were received. So far as it applies to a similar subject, either to an assumed superiority in the teacher, who would “ exercise lordship over God’s heritage,” 1 Peter v. 3; or to the blind submission of the disciple, who makes his faith in man, rather than in the Divine word, the standard of his religious persuasion, so far it contains most wholesome instruction to religionists of every age.

But when the idea, founded on this text, is carried to an extent to justify disobedience to the authority of the church, upon what ground soever it may be maintained, such a wild principle of conduct being totally inconsistent with the object of a regular society, may be determined not to be within the meaning of a precept, delivered by the founder of that society to those who were to become the members of it.

* MATT. xxiii. 28.

The difficulty in this case has always been to establish the exact line of conduct, which will secure that government, without which the church, as a society, cannot subsist; and that liberty to the members of it, necessary to free them from all usurped tyranny over their consciences. Men, according to the different objects which they have had in view, and the ideas which they have formed upon the subject from the different lights in which it has been seen, have been continually drawing this line too much either to the one side or the other of that golden mean, in which reason, founded upon revelation, has placed it.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN, from the consideration of the fallibility of synods, and the disputes which too often prevailed in them, spoke of them with a contempt incompatible with the least degree of reverence for their authority. Such writers as LE CLERC and SCALIGER will not fail to record his saying. “ Si aurem præbeamus viris, quorum alioquin auctoritatem spernere nequaquam possumus, de synodis veteribus loquentibus, nobis magnifica oratione describent ‘ *αγίας και οικεμενικας συνοδους θεοφορων πατερων συναθροισθειας επι τας βασιλειας τε μεγαλης βασιλευς, και ισαποστολης*’—sanctos et œcumenicos cœtus adflatorum divinitus patrum, congre-

gatos in regno magni regis et Apostolis æquiparandi. Quis auditis his et similibus verbis, religioso quodam horrore et corpore et animo non contremiscat, ac paratus non sit oracula ejusmodi cœtus avidis auribus excipere, haud aliter ac si cœlo ipso emitterentur? Verum, hæc est, (quis crederet?) abstracta notio synodorum, quæ in inconspicua idearum republica coguntur; non imago earum, quæ inter miseros mortales olim congregatæ fuere. Reges ignari, (non legent hæc Mohammedani, nec ethnici, sed ii quorum scire interest, quo fiet ut verum aperte proloquar) reges, inquam, ignari, nec inter bonos principes numerandi, convocarunt Græculos, qui linguæ acuendæ per totam vitam operam dederant, rerum ipsarum ignaros, contendendi studiosos, perpetuis rixis inter se divisos; et bardos aliquot homines ex Occidente, rudiores quidem illis, sed non meliores; iique post pudendas contentiones, obscurissima quæque dogmata, verbis sæpe parum aptis, auctoritate suâ firmant; quæ stupidi populi sine examine adorent, quasi divinitus accepta. Non ficta me loqui norunt qui synodorum historias legerunt; nec certe vanus erat GREGORIUS NAZIANZENUS, qui dixit,

‘ Οὐδε τι πρὸ συνάδοισιν ομοθρονος εἶσομαι ἐγώ γε

‘ Χηνων ἢ γερανων ἀκρίτα μαρναμένων

‘ Ἐνθ’ ἐρις, ἐνθά μολος τε, καὶ αἰχρὰ κρυπτα παροίθεν

‘ Εἰς ἐνα δυσμενεων χωρον ἀγειρομενα.’

“ Nunquam ego sedebo in synodis anserum aut gruum temere pugnantium. Illic contentio, illic rixa, et probra antra latentia fœvorum hominum in unum locum collecta.”—CLERICUS, Art. Crit. i. page 430.

The later corruptions of the church of Rome have furnished Protestant divines with a similar theme for declamation. But the defence of either of these causes is not necessary to the support of the ground upon which the present subject stands. The infallibility of councils and synods, and the infallibility of the church of Rome, may be suffered to fall together, without the proper authority of the church of CHRIST, for which alone we plead, being in the least affected by the event. For if CHRIST did leave an authority with his church, (and if he did not, every idea of the church as a visible society must be laid aside) every argument brought against that authority can apply only to the improper exertion of it. Those authors, consequently, who attempt to defend the Reformation upon principles inconsistent with the external constitution of a church, by *general*

and *unrestrained* assertions in favour of private judgment, are in fact serving the cause against which they would be thought, perhaps, to be zealously engaged: for if by any mode of arguing, the governors of the church can be deprived of all authority over its members in spiritual matters, the constitution of the church is dissolved: in this case, all sects stand upon the same footing, and are justified in acting upon the same principle, of gathering as many of the dispersed and scattered Christians into their respective flocks as they can.

This endless division among Christians, so irreconcilable with the unity of the Christian church, (a necessary consequence of the admission of those principles, upon which the Reformation has been defended by some writers) has occasionally proved such a stumbling block to undiscriminating persons, that they have known no other way to get rid of it, than by returning to that state of bondage, from which their forefathers were so happily delivered. And indeed no argument has tended more to confirm the enemies of the Reformation in their prejudices against it, than that which has been drawn from those incautious positions, which, if pursued to their consequences, utterly annihilate all order and government in the church.

In fact, the loose manner of writing, which has of late years prevailed, seems calculated not so much to give an idea of the plan upon which the church of CHRIST has been founded, as by a latitude of interpretation to accommodate the language of scripture to the various opinions that have been formed upon it; that the term of *church communion* may be rendered as *comprehensive* as possible, or mean nothing. A liberality, if so it may be called, which tends to dissolve all ecclesiastical government, and to leave us in possession of no determinate idea upon this important subject. For the unity of the church, upon which so much stress is laid in the sacred writings, is absolutely incompatible with that disjointed state, in which Christians (in consequence of mistaken ideas, and a certain indiscriminate application of terms, which originally conveyed a *distinct* and *appropriate* meaning) now think themselves at liberty to live. And it is a melancholy consideration, that the writings of some persons, who, from their office, were bound to understand the constitution of the Christian church, and to manifest a due zeal for its preservation, by loosening, as it were, what God designed to consolidate into a regular and well connected form, have thereby contributed to furnish

mankind with the most plausible reasons for their various deviations from it.

The produce of the seeds of liberty, sown at the revolution, has, we are sorry to say, in these days, assumed a wildness of growth, not to be reconciled with any regular mode of cultivation. Nor can we be surprized at the circumstance, when we consider the little influence which the Christian religion now possesses on the public mind.

The natural man, it is well known, is indisposed to restraint of every kind. The sacred right of *independence*, as it is called in modern language, is the idol which he worships. Unfortunately for him, considered as a moral agent, there have been distinguished characters in every age, whose talents have stamped a credit upon principles, which tend to favour his natural disposition, by counteracting those modifications of liberty necessary to its becoming an useful quality in society. Forgetting, or not admitting, the actual condition of fallen man, they have proceeded upon the idea, that the chief danger to social happiness was to be apprehended from the side of government; and provided man was but left free enough, he was sure to be what his Creator designed he should be. These distinguished characters have, perhaps,

gained the title which they coveted, that of being esteemed *liberal* men; but they have gained it for the most part at the expence of reason and revelation; and neither church nor state owe them any acknowledgment for their services. For he must be very little acquainted with human nature, and very unobservant of the present progress of licentious opinions, who does not know, that the principles of independence now propagating in the world are absolutely incompatible with all regular order and government.

It has been urged, in reference to the subject immediately before us, that in proportion as the human mind has advanced in knowledge by the progressive discoveries which have from time to time been made in the various branches of science, it has become more qualified to establish a rule of judgment for itself, independent of the authority of former ages. And so far as this position ought to apply, we may reason with LACTANTIUS in support of it. “*DEUS dedit pro virili portione sapientiam—nec quia nos illi temporibus antecesserunt, sapientiâ quoque antecesserunt. Quæ si omnibus æqualiter datur, occupari ab antecedentibus non potest. Sapientiam sibi adimunt qui sine ullo judicio inventa majorum probant, et aliis pæcudum more ducuntur. Sed hoc eos fallit, quod ma-*

jorum nomine posito, non putant fieri posse ut aut illi plus sapiant, quia minores vocantur, aut illi desipuerint, quia majores nominantur.”—LACT. Div. Inst. ii. 7.

But whilst the argument is thus strong in favour of the freedom of human judgment, and against all implicit submission to authority, it is necessary to discriminate in its application.

Subjects of speculation and experiment open to man a boundless field for enquiry and improvement, and were designed to exercise his faculties, and enlarge his understanding. Upon these subjects, he may be expected to *grow* in wisdom, in consequence of its being in his power to profit by the experience of those who have gone before him. His knowledge, therefore, upon these subjects, becomes confirmed in proportion to its advancement.

But in matters of revelation and fact, the conviction of his understanding decreases in proportion as he is removed from the time in which that revelation and fact took place; and depends less upon the exertion of his rational powers, than upon the credibility of the testimony with which they are respectively accompanied. There is a reason, therefore, for deference to authority being paid in the one case, which does not exist in the other; and so long as that

deference is paid with judgment, the cause of truth and knowledge cannot fail to be advanced by it. For the idea of a *progressive* faith and *progressive* history is attended with equal absurdity; because no exertion of the mental powers can produce an alteration in either case. Revelation, being the *declared*, not the *imagined*, will of GOD, must, what misrepresentations soever it may be liable to, continue to be what it was at its original delivery; and facts which once actually took place, can never cease to be facts, whatever attempts may be made to mistake or suppress them.

The fact to which our attention is now directed, is the establishment of the church by CHRIST, the founder of it. That such a fact did take place, is generally admitted. Indeed, to disallow it, would be to renounce all faith in history. The difference of opinion that has unfortunately prevailed with respect to the form of its government, it is not my present purpose to reconcile; for I am now addressing myself to those who are supposed to entertain no difference of opinion on that subject. What is required of the clergy of the church, therefore, is, that their language and conduct should correspond with the judgment which they have formed. Persuaded as they must, or at least ought to be, that the

church, of which they are ministers, is built upon the foundation of the Apostles; that its ordinances are of Divine appointment; and that, consequently, it is that visible society to which Christians ought to be gathered, for the purpose of carrying on the work of salvation; it cannot be a matter of indifference to them, whether communion with this church be preserved, or not. Whatever those who have unhappily separated from it may think, or persuade themselves upon the subject, they who have undertaken a commission in it can, it is presumed, have but one opinion upon it; they must think with IGNATIUS, that “without the bishop, it is neither lawful to baptize, nor to consecrate the feast of love;” and that “*that* eucharist only was in the primitive church accounted firm and good, which was consecrated by the bishop, or one whom he appointed.”*

In the liturgy of the church we pray against *schism*. If, by their writing or conduct, the clergy at the same time give encouragement to it; will they not, in so doing, be thought to be acting in contradiction to the profession which they have made? But this,

* IGNAT. Epist. ad Smyr. cap. 8. Εκεινη βεβαια ευχαριστια ηγιστω, η υπο τον επισκοπον ημα, η ω αν αυτος επαιρηνη.—Ibid. Ουκ εξου εστιν χωρις τω επισκοπου οτι βαπτιζειν, οτι αγαπην ποιειν.

it is to be feared, is the case with all those, who, instead of pointing out to the laity the danger attendant upon their officiously meddling with the ministerial office, and the duty of their submitting to those teachers, who by authority are set over them, by their loose writing or irregular practice lead them to the very opposite conclusion. And what reasonable hope can be entertained, that the unity of the church will be in any degree preserved, whilst those whose office it is to preserve it, become the instruments of its dissolution.

“Much charitable allowance” (a learned bishop of the present day has well observed) “is to be made for the errors of the laity, upon points, to which it is hardly to be expected they should turn their attention of their own accord; and upon which, for some time past, they have been very imperfectly instructed. Dissenters are to be judged with much candour, and with every possible allowance for the prejudices of education. But for those who have been nurtured in the bosom of the church, and have gained admission to the ministry, if, from a mean compliance with the humour of the age, or ambitious of the fame of liberality of sentiment, (for under that specious name a profane indifference is made to pass

for an accomplishment) they affect to join in the disavowal of the authority which they share, or are silent when the validity of their Divine commission is called in question; for any, I hope they are few, who hide this weakness of faith, this poverty of religious principle, under the attire of a gown and cassock, they are, in my estimation, little better than infidels in masquerade.”*

It is not, indeed, to be wondered at, that the opinions of the modern clergy should become less settled upon church matters than they have been; since the authority of a *HOOKE*R, a *HICKES*, and a *LESLEY*, is by many considered to be in a manner superseded by that of an *HOADLEY*, a *WARBURTON*, and a *PALEY*. It is a very common thing for professors of the law to be fed for the support of what they know to be a wrong cause. Would charity allow us to suppose that ministers of the church could ever act upon a similar plan, it appears to me, that the three writers above-mentioned would have deserved well of their supposed clients; for, were I a dissenter from the church, I should seek for no argument to justify my separation, which might not be fairly drawn from their respective writings.

* Bishop HORSLEY's Charge to his Clergy, p. 36.

Bishop HOADLEY, whilst he allowed that there was a Catholic visible church, composed of particular visible churches, which churches ought to be regular societies, by his loose and unqualified positions in favour of religious liberty, so undermined the foundation of all ecclesiastical authority, as to render null and void the concession, which, from a different view of the subject, he found himself constrained to make.*

Bishop WARBURTON, in his Sermons before the Society of Lincoln's-Inn, upon the authority of church government and church communion, appears to be throwing down his gauntlet, in the hope of calling forth some antagonist into the field, with the view of proving himself a more successful champion in favour of religious liberty, than Bishop HOADLEY had been before him. For the principles of these two writers, though perhaps somewhat differently expressed, tend to the establishment of the same point.

WARBURTON acknowledges the church to be a society; that “from the command of its Founder, obedience is due to it as such; and that authority without obedience and submission is but a mockery.”

* To enter at large into a subject which has been so fully treated by a celebrated writer, as to leave nothing to be said upon it, would be to trespass on the reader.—See LAW's Letters to the Bishop of BANGOR.

At the same time he tells his readers, that this obedience and submission are to depend entirely upon the will and opinion of the party intended to be governed. Which is to say, that CHRIST made a law, which as such is obligatory upon the conscience; but which, according to this interpretation annexed to it, man is to obey or not, as he thinks proper. For (in the words of this learned writer) “all the jurisdiction which follows from the authority committed to the church of CHRIST, is this: that so long as any man continue a member of this society, called the Church, he is to be obedient to such laws of his spiritual governors, as concern discipline; but when he chooses to withdraw himself from that society, the rights of conscience (as it is erroneously called) furnish him with a justifiable exemption from his former obligation.” So that conscience, in such case, not being governed by the *law laid down*, but by the judgment from time to time formed upon it, enjoining obedience or justifying disobedience, according to the different disposition of the judging party; it follows, that church communion, instead of being a matter of Christian obligation, dwindles down into a matter of mere private opinion.

The above mode of stating this subject might have force in it, provided the church was a *human* society, of which men were left at liberty to become members, or not. But as the church is a society of CHRIST's forming, with the intent that all men should be admitted into it, for the purpose of their being saved in it; and the government of it was established by CHRIST, with a view to the effectual promotion of that gracious object; every exertion of human liberty, in this case, must be at the peril of the party exerting it; it being exerted in opposition to a positive establishment, and in a matter in which it does not appear that GOD has left man at liberty to determine for himself. For if the establishment of the church by CHRIST be *true*, the dissenter from it is in an error; if his error be unavoidable, we rejoice to think that he is in the hands of a merciful GOD; but should he deceive himself, should his separation from the church be derived from *evil causes*, be it remembered, that that wise Being who has established nothing in vain, is not to be mocked.

But to render submission to ecclesiastical authority incompatible with the liberty of the rational Christian, recourse has generally been had to arguments drawn from the usurped tyranny of the church of Rome;

which, though well calculated to produce effect upon the mind of the Protestant, do not apply to the subject; unless we consider submission to an authority established by Divine wisdom, and to the corruption of it by human pride, to be the same thing. Widely different, however, as these cases are, the Protestant is not taught to discriminate between them, when he is told (as he is by the author here alluded to) that the principle upon which the Reformation proceeded, was not so much a right of separation from the errors of a corrupt church, as “that Christian liberty which gives every man a right to worship God according to his conscience.” But surely this is making the exertion of what is called *Christian liberty*, regarded *merely as such*, rather than the cause in which it is exerted, the object of consideration; upon which principle, separation from a false church and separation from a true one, become modes of conduct entitled to equal justification. Yet such is the *Protestant ground*, upon which the Protestant church of England has been placed by some modern Divines, by whom protestantism is made to consist in the right of separating from a church, without regard to the cause. “When we left the Popish doctrines, (says Bishop HOADLEY) was it because they were *actually* corrupt? No; the

reason was, because we thought them so." The same reason, therefore, founded in the private opinion of the party, justifies separation from any other church, whatever its actual state may be. "The principle of the Reformation (says Bishop WARBURTON) was not so much a right of separation from the errors of a corrupt church, as that Christian liberty, which gives every man a right to worship GOD according to his conscience;"* in other words, to separate from a church when he thinks proper.

Bishop JEWELL, however, who partook of the spirit of our reformers, thought very differently upon this subject. In his apology for the Church of England, he writes thus:

"The church of Rome (says he) accuse us of heresy, of separation from the church and communion of CHRIST. It is true, we separated, but not as heretics do from the church of CHRIST, but as all good men ought to do, from the corrupt society of

* But supposing this conscience, according to which a man worships GOD, to be an *erroneous* one; what then? Should my reader have duly attended to a foregoing chapter on Conscience, he will, I flatter myself, have an answer ready for this question; because he will perceive, that the Bishop, in this case, does not appear to make that necessary distinction between *conscience rightly so called*, and *strong opinion or persuasion*.

wicked and hypocritical persons. Neither should we have separated at all, but upon the utmost necessity; and even then it was with all the unwillingness imaginable." The corruption of the church of Rome then was (in direct contradiction to what Bishop HOADLEY says on this subject) the ground upon which our separation from it was built; not that right of Christian liberty, for which Bishop WARBURTON is here pleading: a right which Bishop JEWELL never admitted; as may be seen from his sermon at ST. PAUL'S Cross, in which he learnedly defends the church of England, and severely condemns the Dissenters for their *non-conformity* to it; which he could not consistently have done, had he seen the Reformation in the light in which Bishops HOADLEY and WARBURTON have here placed it.

In fact, this right, upon which the reformers did *not* act, because it was a right which they did *not* acknowledge, takes the Reformation off from that firm ground of reason and scripture upon which it will ever stand secure; and places it upon that uncertain ground of precarious opinion, upon which the church, as a society, can no where exist.

For if Christian liberty give every man a right to worship GOD according to his conscience, in

other words, according to his own *private opinion and persuasion*, (for conscience, in the modern acceptation of the term, means nothing more) I would be glad to know what argument can be brought to promote the unity of the Christian church, which this principle does not immediately set aside; a principle which justifies the extravagancies of the wildest sectary, and places religious persuasions of every kind upon the same dead level.

Bishop WARBURTON'S notions of the church communion, as it was to be expected, correspond with his notions of church authority; and appear calculated rather to loosen and dissolve that bond of union, by which the church of CHRIST was designed to be held together, than to answer any other purpose. They are founded upon the following distinction, which this celebrated writer has made between the Jewish and Christian church. "The Gospel (says he) was first addressed to the Jews as *a nation, a church, a society*. But when the Gentiles had in their turn the Gospel offered unto them, the address was only to *particulars*. For though the terms of salvation respected the Jewish Sanhedrim, yet the Roman Senate, as such, had no concern in them. And those *particulars* who received the word, became,

not necessarily, from the simple nature and genius of the faith, *members of any community*, but of the *spiritual kingdom of God*."

Should the foregoing account of the distinction between Jew and Gentile have conveyed a satisfactory idea to the mind of the reader, it certainly has not to mine; for with a desire to pay all due respect to the authority from whence it proceeds, I have been unable to discover the least ground for it.

The Jewish Sanhedrim and Roman Senate, with respect to the terms of salvation under the Gospel, appear to have stood precisely upon the same footing: for to the members of neither of these bodies, in their collective character, were those terms addressed. In ST. PETER's first sermon at Jerusalem, his address was not to the Jews as *a nation, a church, or a society*; but to "the men of Israel, who had crucified the LORD CHRIST." And his answer to their question, when, upon their being pricked in their hearts, they said to PETER and the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" was thus addressed to them as *individuals*—"Repent, and be baptized, *every one* of you, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts ii. 38. It was ordained,

indeed, that the Gospel should be first preached to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; upon the idea, it is probable, that from their education under the law, as a school-master to bring them to CHRIST, they ought to have been in a state of preparation to receive it. But this particular attention to the Jew, though it tended for some little time to confirm the Apostles in their prejudices, made no alteration in the nature of the commission which they had received. That was of the most general kind. They were "to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*." MARK xvi. 15. When "the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile had been broken down by him, who had made both one," the church was open for the equal reception of all people. In the general execution therefore of the Apostolic commission, there was to be "no difference between Jew and Greek, between bond and free, between male and female; all were to be one in CHRIST JESUS; the same Lord over all, being rich unto all who call upon him." Rom. x. 12. Gal. iii. 28. Both Jew and Gentile, therefore, were admitted into the church of CHRIST upon the same plan; respect being had only to their profession of faith, as *individuals*, in a crucified Redeemer.

The distinction, then, here made between the Jew and Gentile, in their manner of receiving the Gospel, appears to be not less imaginary, than the conclusion built upon it to be unfounded. For the spiritual kingdom of GOD has generally been understood, in scripture language, to be descriptive of the Church of CHRIST; or of *that community* of which the author must be supposed to be here speaking.

This mode, therefore, of representing Christians, as members of *CHRIST's spiritual kingdom*, as it were in contradistinction to their being members of *any community*, is that kind of description which every professor will not fail to accommodate to his own particular case; but it is not to be reconciled with the account of the Christian church in the sacred writings; into which all who professed the true faith were necessarily to be admitted. For from these writings it appears, that the *particulars* to whom the Gospel was addressed, were, by virtue of their faith, admitted members of a *community*, or spiritual society, distinguished by the name of the *kingdom* or *church* of *CHRIST*.

It would be to trespass upon the reader to enter upon a particular analysis of this learned author's mode of arguing upon the subject before him; or

to point out the various contradictions that are to be met with in the pages alluded to. It may suffice to observe, that the argument upon which much is built, by all advocates for religious liberty, and which has its force when confined to the corruptions of the church of Rome, becomes weak and ineffectual in its general application to the church of CHRIST.

But an author, who, though highly distinguished for his sagacity and erudition, appears, from his writings, not to have formed a consistent idea of the nature and constitution of the Christian Church himself, cannot be expected to convey that idea to his readers. And in such case, great abilities serve rather to confound and perplex the truth, by rendering it a subject of more complex investigation, than to elucidate and confirm it.

What we lament in this case is, that bishops, whose sacred office it is to preside over and govern the church of CHRIST committed to their charge, should use a language calculated, if generally acted upon, to leave no church on earth for the exercise of the spiritual authority with which they have been entrusted.

There is still a third writer of great respectability, whose opinions upon church subjects appear to differ

widely from those of the old school. In his chapter on religious establishments, Archdeacon PALEY informs his readers, "That it cannot be proved that any form of church government was laid down in the Christian church; that no command for that purpose was delivered by CHRIST himself; and upon the supposition that bishops and presbyters were appointed by the Apostles, that the *true conclusion* is, that such offices were at first erected in the Christian church, as the good order, the instruction, and exigencies of the society at that time required; without any intention of regulating the appointment, authority, or the distinction of Christian ministers under future circumstances."

Such appears to be the Archdeacon's conclusion upon this subject; although such is not the conclusion which it might be expected would have been drawn by a presbyter of the episcopal church. But without opposing to this confident assertion of Dr. PALEY our own confident negative, (which, from our particular examination of this subject, we need not hesitate to do;) it shall be observed only, that the Doctor's argument, though entitled to attention, upon the consideration of the quarter from whence it proceeds, does not stand upon firm ground.

Should we allow, that no command from our SAVIOUR, respecting the form of church government appears upon record, does it follow from thence that no command was ever delivered upon this subject? And on the ground that no express form of church government is to be found, *totidem verbis*, laid down in the scripture, are we authorized in concluding, from that circumstance, that no form was established?

The instructions which our SAVIOUR might, and most probably did, give the Apostles on this subject, upon the delivery of their commission;* the resemblance to be expected between the form of government established under the Jewish and Christian

* The Apostle to the Hebrews, speaking of the priests under the law, says, Heb. viii. 5, that they served "unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as MOSES was admonished of GOD when he was about to make the tabernacle; for see," saith he, "that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the Mount." From whence it appears, that the plan for the service of the tabernacle was delivered by GOD to MOSES in the Mount. We do not say, that the necessary inference from the above circumstance is, that our SAVIOUR's conference with his Apostles in the Mount, when he delivered to them their commission, had a similar object in view with respect to the service of his church; but we think that the analogy between the two cases does at least make such a conclusion highly probable; and ought, in our judgment, to more than balance against any supposed want of information on this subject in the Apostolic writings.

œconomy, considered as two branches of the same Christian church; (Christianity being only Judaism spiritualized) and the circumstance of the Apostles, in the discharge of their office, acting under immediate inspiration; are considerations which appear not to have had sufficient weight allowed them in the Archdeacon's scale of judgment. Whilst his reasons why no permanent church government could be fixed upon, because "no precise constitution could be framed, which would suit with the condition of Christianity in its primitive state, and with that which it was to assume, when it should be advanced into a national religion; and because a particular designation of office or authority amongst the ministers of the new religion might have so interfered with the arrangements of civil policy, as to have formed, in some countries, a considerable obstacle to the progress and reception of the religion itself;" are reasons which, it is presumed, will not be generally admitted.

That a "religious establishment is no part of Christianity, but only the means of inculcating it," is a position that will be readily granted. But if a religious establishment have been deemed necessary to the propagation of Christianity, it will be concluded, that that form of it, which was set on foot by those

inspired persons, to whom the charge of the church was first committed, is best calculated to answer the end in view. This is a fair presumption, not to be set aside but upon substantial evidence.

“The authority of a church establishment is founded,” we are told, “on its utility.” The position, thus stated, appears capable of leading into error. The authority of the establishment of the Christian church is founded upon the character of the party who established it; that party being JESUS CHRIST, through the ministry of his Apostles, its utility must of course be admitted. No supposed improvements, therefore, to be expected from human “deliberations concerning the form, propriety, or comparative excellency of different establishments,” can balance against the authority of those persons, who were favoured with that competent judgment upon this subject, which is now no longer possessed.

The Archdeacon’s arguments upon this subject, if I understand them, may, when brought together, be thus stated: “A religious establishment is no part of Christianity. It cannot be proved, that any form of church government was ever laid down in the Christian church. However this be, certain it is, no command was delivered by CHRIST on the subject.

But admitting that the form of government, by bishops and presbyters, was established by the Apostles, it must be considered only as a form adapted to the circumstances of the church at that time, but not with a view to its being a permanent establishment; because no precise constitution could be framed, which would suit the church in its accommodation to the different arrangements of civil policy. The authority of a church establishment is founded in its utility." The conclusion to which the foregoing premises are designed to lead, seems to be this: That whenever it shall appear to the governing powers, that any new church establishment, different from that in possession, shall be more conducive to utility, as a scheme of religious instruction, than that set on foot by the Apostles; they are justified in adopting it.

But before this conclusion be admitted, we have a right to be satisfied with respect to the validity of the premises upon which it is built.

In answer to the position, "that it cannot be proved that any form of church government was laid down in the Christian church, with a view of fixing a constitution for succeeding ages," some readers will say, that the contrary position has been *abundantly* proved. The authority of St. IGNATIUS and CLE-

MENT, to pass over later writers, will, in the opinion of many, be deemed sufficient to balance against it.

The certainty with respect to our SAVIOUR's having delivered no command on this subject does by no means appear: this *certainty* stands only on the ground of the Archdeacon's naked assertion; to establish which, it must be proved that every thing that passed between our SAVIOUR and his Apostles, relative to his church, has been recorded. This undoubtedly is not the case. The Apostle, for instance, directs his disciples "to obey them that had the rule over them, and to submit themselves." The commission then, which the Apostles received, invested them with an authority, to which Christians were to be obedient. But there is no positive command of our SAVIOUR's to be produced, upon which such authority is built. To guard, therefore, against the idea of the Apostles assuming to themselves an authority, which their commission did not warrant; it must be supposed, that the evangelical narrative does not contain all the particulars relative to this subject. Now we read, Acts i. 3, of our SAVIOUR's being seen alive of his Apostles, during the space of forty days after his passion; and of his "*giving them commandments, and speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of*

GOD." Is it not, then, most reasonable to conclude, that some of these commandments, and part of the instruction vouchsafed to the Apostles at this time, respected the settlement and government of the Christian church; and that although nothing decisive on this subject has been left upon record, the conduct of the Apostles in the discharge of their high commission was in a great measure regulated by the directions which they had received.

But, upon the supposition that the Apostles, in their establishment of the church, were governed by the considerations pointed out by the author here alluded to; before we place the authority of the governors of the church at any subsequent period upon a level with that of the Apostles in a matter of this kind, it requires that we should be satisfied that the advantages possessed by them are equal with those heretofore possessed by the Apostles for the direction of their judgment on this subject.

The establishment of the Christian church being only *temporary*, to be altered as the future circumstances of society, and the different arrangements of civil policy, might require, appears to be a position irreconcilable with the independence of the Christian church, and calculated only to corrupt it. Before

it be therefore admitted, some strong proof should be brought that the establishment of the church was designed to be of this *accommodating* nature. The language and conduct of the Apostles in the discharge of their office, together with the state of the church for the first three hundred years of its existence, authorize us to draw the contrary conclusion.

In fact, the connection of the church with the state appears to be an accidental circumstance, which may, or may not, exist; and which, consequently, did not constitute a part of the plan upon which it was originally established. The state may come into the church, as in the days of CONSTANTINE; but the church is not to accommodate itself to the state, to produce this effect: or the state may be in opposition to the church, as in the days of the Apostles. Its establishment therefore, as a *spiritual society*, must respect its *permanent* condition, as it exists *in itself* upon the authority of its Divine Founder; not its *accidental* one, as it is occasionally connected with civil policy. When kings and queens become the nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the church, the church is supported and benefited by their protection: when those who ought to protect and support it, desert it or act in opposition to it, the church

is no longer in a flourishing condition with respect to temporalities; but its *establishment* is in both cases the same.

When Archdeacon PALEY, therefore, talks about “framing an ecclesiastical constitution, adapted to real life, and to the actual state of actual religion in the country,” he appears (if I understand him right) to be placing the subject in that *political* point of view, in which it was never designed to stand; and to be giving scope to that innovating spirit, which must be the consequence of establishing the Christian church upon a *human*, rather than a *Divine*, foundation.

Before Dr. PALEY again commits himself on this important subject, he will do well to consider what was so judiciously said upon it a hundred years ago; “that in accommodating church government to the frame and occasion of the state, nothing be *diseestablished* or *unsettled*, that seems to have been settled by the authority of scripture. Therefore, whereas we see there the government of the church first settled in the hands of bishops, that is, pastors that had authority over pastors; (see epistles to TIMOTHY and TITUS) and we find no other form of church government, neither in the scripture, nor in the practice of the universal church; though the whole form and

frame of episcopal government is not *so expressly* prescribed, but that the church may, in many things, have power of making therein accommodations to the times and exigencies of the state; yet may not those acts of accommodation amount to such a height, as to subvert or abolish the government, which by the judgment of her members, *then infallible*, was set on foot; because no judgment of *her present members now* can come in any competition with *her first*. And if any state shall so accommodate itself, the accommodators may, perhaps, be found *fighting against the spirit of God*, manifested both in the scripture, and in the judgment and practice of the universal church of God.”*

A shorter and still more direct answer to the Archdeacon's eccentric position, respecting the appointment of bishops, considered only as a matter of temporary accommodation to the circumstances of the primitive church, will be found in the following judicious observation of the celebrated Mr. LAW.

“ We do not say that episcopacy cannot be changed, merely because we have Apostolical practice for it; but because such is the nature of the Christian priest-

* “ A Protestant's Account of his Orthodox Religion,” p. 16, 17. Published in “ Bibliotheca Scriptorum Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ;” by the Rev. GEO. HICKES, D. D.

hood, that it can only be continued in that method which God has appointed for its continuance. Episcopacy is the only instituted method of continuing the priesthood; therefore episcopacy is unchangeable. The Apostolical practice, indeed, shews that episcopacy is the order that is appointed; but it is the nature of the priesthood that assures us that it is unalterable. So that the question is not fairly stated, when it is asked, whether episcopacy, being an Apostolical practice, may be laid aside? But it should be asked, whether an instituted particular method of continuing the priesthood be not necessary to be continued? Whether an appointed order of receiving a commission from God be not necessary to be observed, in order to receive a commission from Him? If the case were thus stated, as it ought to be fairly stated, any one would soon perceive, that we can no more lay aside episcopacy, and yet continue the Christian priesthood, than we can alter the terms of salvation, and yet be in covenant with God."* Till the Archdeacon has answered what has been so ably advanced upon this subject by the celebrated writer above-mentioned, the reader will readily dispense with further enlargement upon it.

* LAW'S Second Letter to Bishop HOADLEY.

That a writer, who sees the Christian church in the light in which Dr. PALEY appears to see it, rather as an appendage to the state, than as a society possessing an existence and government independent of it, should express himself on the subject of creeds and confessions in the manner he has done, is but what was to be expected. He who considers the establishment of the Christian church as the mere result of human judgment, exercised on that particular subject at a certain given time, will consider the establishment of creeds and confessions, as expressive merely of the opinion or persuasion of the age in which they were composed; rather than as fixing any standard of judgment for mankind at any future time.

To such a person the establishment of the Christian church, and the establishment of an article of Christian faith, will appear subjects equally open to discussion; and subjects upon which no settled judgment can ever be formed; because they must be continually varying with the opinions of mankind upon them. What was therefore an acknowledged article of faith in the primitive church, may in process of time cease to be so; because (to make use of the Archdeacon's words) "in consequence of the changes which are wont to take place in the judgment

of mankind, it may contradict the actual opinion of the church of the present day upon that subject.”—The inference to be drawn from this position may be extended, I should conceive, beyond the boundaries marked out to it in the author’s mind. For, as an unqualified position, it authorizes us to conclude, that articles of faith, supposed to be built upon the revealed word of GOD, are matters of mere opinion; in other words, that articles of faith are true, just so long as men think them to be so, and no longer.

How this position is to be reconciled with the rule laid down by TERTULLIAN, and universally acted upon in the primitive church, we must leave DOCTOR PALEY to consider. “*Regula fidei immobilis irreformabilis; cætera disciplinæ et conversationis admittunt novitatem correctionis.*”* And should this fluctuating position be admitted, in what sense, it may be asked, can the church be called, as it is by the Apostle, *the ground and pillar of the truth*? Instead of having any form of sound words to have recourse to for the determination of his judgment on any given point, the Christian must, in this case, be continually asking, *what is truth*? And if it be made to depend upon the fluctuating opinions of men, we

* TERTULLIAN, Lib. de Virgin. veland.

may venture to say, that it will not be worth his while to wait for the answer.*

By a person entertaining the foregoing idea respecting the accommodation of religious subjects to

* The accommodating articles of faith to the varying opinions of the members of the church for the time being appears to be so very inconsistent with the direction given by ST. PAUL to TIMOTHY for the discharge of his ministry, that that part of ST. PAUL'S writings must, it may be supposed, have escaped the Archdeacon's observation. "Hold fast," said ST. PAUL to TIMOTHY, "*the form of sound words*, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in JESUS CHRIST." 2 TIM. i. 13. "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." 2 TIM. ii. 2. ST. PAUL (as we read Acts ix) was, by an immediate command from the head of the church, sent to ANANIAS and the disciples at Damascus, for instruction in the Gospel. The knowledge received by ST. PAUL on this subject, he afterwards communicated to TIMOTHY; whom, on that account, he called "*his own son in the faith*;" 1 TIM. i. 2; with direction that he should commit the same to other faithful men, for the purpose of their teaching the same to others. Here then appears to be a form of sound words handed down through five successive stages, originating with CHRIST himself; a circumstance, which warrants the conclusion that a certain standard of doctrine was established in the church for the uniform profession of its members from time to time.

But, according to the Archdeacon's idea upon this subject, TIMOTHY should have reminded ST. PAUL, that however determined he might be in his own mind to hold fast *the form of sound words*, which had been delivered to him; nevertheless that he could not take upon himself to answer for the conduct of those who might succeed him in the ministry; because, "by reason of the changes that are wont to take place in the opinions of mankind upon religious subjects," the form of doctrine which he had received might

the changeable opinions of mankind, it was to be expected that creeds and confessions should be considered as attended with serious inconveniences. Establishments of every kind are liable to the same objection; they will be inconvenient to those who wish to be at liberty, and sometimes so far forget the nature of man, and the condition of society, as to be persuaded, that they ought to be at liberty to establish every thing for themselves. But the question is, whether this objection be not abundantly overbalanced by the convenience derived to mankind from their adoption. It may not be possible to guard against all the inconveniencies arising from establishments, in which fallible men are concerned: there are however some, against which we would not wish to guard. The laws of the land, for instance, are inconvenient to those who are indisposed to obey them. So are creeds and confessions to those who are disinclined to believe them. Whilst by others they are considered as restraints upon human liberty, necessary to the preservation of peace, order, and truth, in the world.

not be suited to the future circumstances of the church; the establishment of it, therefore, must be left to depend upon the discretion and judgment of its ministers for the time being. The answer which ST. PAUL would have returned upon such an occasion, the reader, it is presumed, has already formed for himself.

The charge brought against the latter, that they check inquiry, and violate liberty, does not appear to be well founded. It certainly was not intended that creeds and confessions should check *proper* inquiry: for every Christian is called upon "to prove all things;" to make inquiry, that he may be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him; but "withal to hold fast that which is good." Should doubt remain upon this subject, the language of the Homilies will clear it up; by which the opinions of our reformers may be clearly ascertained. In the first of these homilies, which begins with a fruitful exhortation to the reading and knowledge of the holy scriptures, the members of the church of England are conjured to read and judge for themselves. "Let us reverently," (say our reformers) "hear and read holy scripture, which is the food of the soul: let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the Old and New Testament; for in holy scripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to eschew, what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at God's hand at length. *In these books we shall find the Father from whom, the Son to whom, and the Holy Ghost in whom all things have their being, and keeping up; and these three per-*

sons to be but one God and one substance. In these books we may learn to know ourselves, how vile and miserable we be; and also to know God, how good he is of himself, and how he maketh us and all creatures partakers of his goodness. We may learn also in these books to know God's will and pleasure, as much as is convenient for us to know. And (as the great clerk and godly preacher, St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM faith) "whatsoever is requested to the salvation of man, is fully contained in the scripture of God." Is such language calculated to check inquiry? Does it require the members of the church to subscribe to her doctrines without examination? Does it not rather enforce the very contrary mode of proceeding? The conclusion therefore is, that the articles of the church, though recommended to the Christian professor as summary deductions from the language of Holy Writ, were not designed by the compilers of them either to supersede the use of the scriptures, or to abridge the right of private judgment so far as it might be exercised with advantage to the party. And he who, upon proper examination, cannot adopt the faith professed in the church, is left, as he ought to be, to worship God in his own way.

As creeds and confessions, therefore, were not meant to check inquiry, so neither can they be said to violate liberty; because no man is under obligation to subscribe to them. All that is required in this case being, that he who does subscribe shall do it *ex animo*, as an honest man; plain language which admits of no ambiguity in the interpretation.

Should Dr. PALEY, therefore, have any serious objections to the creeds and confessions of the church of England, (which, from his manner of writing on the subject, some readers may be led to conclude) he has but to follow the steps of those honest men who have seceded from the communion of the church, because their consciences would not suffer them to continue in possession of preferments which must necessarily be accompanied with a *declared assent* to her doctrine.

But when we are told, that creeds and confessions “ensnare the consciences of the clergy, by holding out temptation to prevarication;” it appears to us, that a respect for the body should have withheld such a supposition. For my own part, I can say, that I did not prevaricate on this subject. Charity bids me hope, that every one of my brethren can say the same.

But notwithstanding the objections made to the establishment of creeds and confessions, the Arch-deacon does not absolutely determine that they ought to be abolished, but that they “should be made as *simple and easy* as possible;” in other words, that by the general and comprehensive form in which they are drawn up, they may possess as little of the nature of a test as possible. If, for instance, “promises of conformity to the rites, liturgy, and offices of the church, be sufficient to prevent confusion and disorder in the celebration of Divine worship, then such promises ought to be accepted, in the place of stricter subscriptions.”

By *stricter subscriptions*, we are here to understand, it is presumed, subscriptions to our creeds and articles. But if these subscriptions to the doctrines of the church prove sometimes ineffectual to the security of the desired object, can better hopes be entertained from mere promises of conformity to its rites, liturgy, and offices? Upon the supposition, that an honest man can, as a minister, make use of the liturgy of a church, whose creeds he does not believe; will conformity to the liturgy of a church answer every purpose of a belief of the doctrines contained in it? Surely not. “If articles of peace, as they are called,

that is, engagements not to preach certain doctrines, nor to revive certain controversies, would exclude indecent altercations among the national clergy, as well as secure to the public teaching of religion as much of uniformity and quiet as is necessary to edification, then confessions of faith ought to be converted into articles of peace."

This mode of pleading in behalf of religious liberty does not appear calculated to do service to the cause. To me the violation of religious liberty appears to be greater upon the plan here laid down, than upon the one adopted by the church in the case of its ministers.

We will suppose that a minister who disbelieved the divinity of our SAVIOUR, Dr. PRIESTLEY, for instance, should, for the sake of peace and order, conform to the rites, liturgy, and offices of the church; and upon his engagement not to preach *certain doctrines*, or to revive *certain controversies*, should be admitted into its sacred ministry. Would not the engagement, by which Dr. PRIESTLEY, in the discharge of his ministry, is held bound, not to preach those very doctrines, which in his conscience he believes *to be true*, be a much greater violation of his Christian liberty, than the excluding him from an

office by a test, to which he, as an honest man, cannot subscribe? ST. PAUL, when he took leave of the church of Ephesus, told the elders of it, that he had kept back nothing that was profitable for them; “I take you to record (says he) this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of GOD.” Acts xv. 26. Would not Dr. PRIESTLEY, with the example of ST. PAUL before him, when he felt himself shackled by the obligation under which the church had laid him, be apt to bring the authority of the Archdeacon against himself, by telling him in his own words, that “every species of intolerance which enjoins suppression and silence, and every species of persecution which enforces such injunctions, is adverse to the progress of truth;” and that consequently such an engagement as the one here proposed ought not to be required?

But there is a consideration which church governors must be supposed to have before them, in the establishment of creeds and confessions, which must always give them a decided preference to the plan here proposed; because they promise to answer an effectual purpose; whilst an engagement of a looser nature might answer no purpose but a bad one.

But before reformation in any case is adopted, the considerate man wishes to be informed, with respect to the precise nature of the reformation proposed; that he may be qualified to compare the present condition of things with what it may be under a new system. Some inconveniencies in the establishment of public societies, like some distempers in the body, are borne with less danger than they are cured. Before the establishment, therefore, of our present test is set aside, he requires to be made acquainted with the conditions of the engagement proposed to supersede it; what particulars it respects; and what are those *certain doctrines* upon which it enjoins silence; lest the extreme of our profession being burdened with more articles of faith, than may by some be deemed necessary to existing circumstances, should lead to an opposite but still more dangerous extreme, by which the church may be left unpossessed of any *settled faith* at all.

In short, the object of a test is to preserve the unity of the faith among those who are appointed to teach the Christian religion; should it not be made sufficiently explicit to answer that purpose, the object in view is defeated, and the end of its establishment rendered nugatory. In due subserviency to this

consideration, the position advanced, "that tests and subscriptions should be made as simple and easy as possible," will be readily admitted.

But the reason given for relaxing the terms of subscription, or for dropping any or all of the articles to be subscribed, "that no present necessity requires the strictness which is complained of, or that it should be extended to so many points of doctrine," is a reason that will not perhaps be readily admitted. The propriety of fixing some standing marks upon those errors, by which Christians in former days have made shipwreck of their faith, appears to be of a similar kind with that of placing a light-house upon a dangerous rock, where ships have been heretofore cast away. It is an old saying, that what has been may be again. Heresies, like the fashions of the world, have a kind of periodical revolution. A man who could sit still for a certain number of years, might in both cases fancy himself living in the days of his forefathers.

No man should, indeed, be charged with all the consequences which may regularly follow from his notions; whilst he neither draws them, nor perhaps perceives, nor owns them. But in the treatment of religious matters, it were much to be wished, that

no opening should be left, for consequences to be drawn inimical to the Christian cause; by giving a greater degree of latitude to human speculations than is consistent with the nature of the subjects upon which they are employed.

The Archdeacon's objection to tests and subscriptions is, that "they have been extended, multiplied, and continued, beyond what the occasion justified." Should this have been the case, the remedy proposed against the evil, that they should have no permanent establishment, but be adapted, from time to time, to the varying sentiments and circumstances of the church in which they are received, appears to be better suited to the members of the Roman Catholic, than to those of the Protestant, persuasion; by making the opinions of men, rather than the revealed word of God, the standard of Christian faith. Upon this principle, the most notorious heresy may at times become the established faith; and the creed of a Pope Pius stand upon the same ground of authority with that of the Apostles.

The foundation upon which this position is built must be supposed to be this; that the judgment of mankind upon religious subjects improves in proportion to their advancement in other branches of science:

in consequence, a modern establishment of creeds and confessions ought, upon the ground of superior perfection, to supersede that of any former age.*

This, if I recollect right, is the idea upon which Dr. PRIESTLEY has proceeded in his discourse upon the subject of free enquiry in religious matters. If my memory serve me well, (for I have not the discourse at hand) the Doctor's words are these: "In nature we see no limits to our enquiries. One discovery always leads to many more, and brings us into a still wider field of speculation. Why, then," (continues the same writer) "should not this be the case, in some degree, with respect to knowledge of a moral and religious kind?" The effect which this principle has in its operation produced in the mind of Dr. PRIESTLEY, according to his own account, has been, that, after having led him through several different

* The following anecdote, which has lately fallen in my way, is subjoined for the reader's application: At an ordination service, which took place at a meeting of Dissenters, it was observed by a minister who was expatiating on the modern improvements in religious knowledge, that the divines of the present day possessed great advantages; "for standing, as they must be considered to do, upon the shoulders of the Apostles, they could therefore see further than they did." To which an old minister present, who did not see the subject in the same light, shrewdly replied, "that the modern divines, it must be allowed, not only saw further than the Apostles did, but also further, he believed, than ever God saw yet."

modes of faith, to a profession destitute of all the essential doctrines of Christianity, it has left him still in a state of uncertainty with respect to the "*ne plus ultra*" of his creed. And though this principle may not always be attended with the same fatal consequences, yet if the ground upon which it is built be unsound, the principle itself ought not to be admitted.

When we consider the various opinions which have prevailed, and which continue to prevail, upon the subject of religion, we feel ourselves occasionally at some loss to reconcile them with that uniform consistency, which is one of the most striking characteristics of truth; no less than with the benevolent design which the DEITY must have had in view, in revealing that truth to the world. But when we take a view of man in his present state of degeneracy, as a being perverse in will, and corrupt in understanding; we cease to be surprised at an effect necessarily resulting from that variety of causes, to which the opinions and practices of men are at different times to be traced up. Pride, self-opinion, interest, and passion, are the most prevailing principles of the human mind. A singleness of heart, accompanied with an uncorrupt love of truth for the truth's sake, is a perfection to be coveted, rather than to be looked for, from that general de-

rangement of the human faculties which was brought about by the fall. When the same subject, therefore, is viewed through those different mediums, which correspond with the different characters and dispositions of the parties concerned; it is not to be expected that an uniform conclusion should be drawn from it.

But there is a medium, it is presumed, between throwing an improper stumbling-block in the way of human enquiry, and that degree of license which is destructive of all authority, by placing the improvement which is to be expected from human speculations in religion, and other branches of knowledge, upon the same footing. The work of grace in the revelation of the Divine will, not being designed so much to exercise and improve the head as to correct and purify the heart, becomes on that account a subject for faith and practice, rather than speculation. The discoveries in nature and art, though calculated to improve the condition of man in this world, as a rational and social being, were nevertheless left to depend for their advancement upon the exertion of those natural faculties with which God thought fit to furnish him. But religion was a subject of too essential importance to be left upon such an uncertain

footing. The advancement of it, therefore, became an object of immediate attention to the DEITY himself. Religion, then, as coming from GOD, must be perfect; and can receive no improvement from the wit of man. We may talk of the progress of the arts and sciences; and in this sense the phrase is properly applied; but when we carry the same idea with us into religion, we are attempting to place subjects under the same point of view, which are as widely separated as earth from heaven. The characteristic doctrines of the Gospel have nothing to do with our improvements in any other science whatever; as they were originally revealed by GOD, the same they must continue; objects of *faith*, and of *knowledge*, to the end of time. “If studying the works be the method (says a learned divine) of knowing the workman, it is somewhat mysterious, that these last ages, which have so vastly improved natural philosophy, should have made no new discoveries in the Divine nature; which is neither more nor less than it was before; just so far as GOD revealed it, and no human mind can carry it further; yet we see every day fresh reasons to admire his wisdom and adore his power, but not to add to his nature or perfections.”

Religion, it is certain, may be corrupted; for experience tells us it has been so in numberless instances; and as the best of things, it is perhaps the most liable to be so. In such case it becomes necessary that it should be reformed. But according to a well-known axiom, “to *innovate* is not to *reform*.” The reformation of religion does not consist, therefore, in *modernizing* its profession, by an accommodation of it to prevailing opinions, but in restoring it to its primitive standard; in conformity with the position laid down by one of the most ancient fathers of the church, “that what was first, that is true; whatsoever comes after, that is corrupt.” It is therefore to lay anew the foundation; to go back to the beginning, (according to our SAVIOUR’s expression to the Pharisees) to return to the ways of our fathers; having that sentence in view which was heretofore pronounced in the Council of Nice, “*ἡδὴ ἀρχαία κρατεῖτω.*” Upon this rational ground did the reformation of our church originally proceed. “Be it known to all the world,” (says Bishop HALL) “that our church is only *reformed* or *repaired*, not made *new*: there is not one stone of a new foundation laid by us; yea the old walls stand still; only the overcasting of those ancient stones with the untem-

pered mortar of new inventions displease thus. Set aside the corruptions, and the church is the same." Upon this same ground must every reformation of the church continue to proceed: it must tend to some established point, and be governed by some fixed standard of judgment; otherwise a boundless field of speculation being opened to the human mind, theory will follow upon theory in endless succession; till man, with respect to his most important concern, will be left in the hopeless condition described by the Apostle, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

In a word, what upon the ground of Divine revelation was the faith of the church seventeen hundred years ago, must continue to be so still. "God has revealed himself; and all that He has spoken, and consequently all that is demanded of us to accede to, is declared in one book; from which nothing is to be retrenched, and to which nothing can be added. All that it contains, was as perspicuous to those who first perused it, as it can be to us now, or as it can be to our posterity in the fiftieth generation." To talk, therefore, of adapting creeds and confessions to the varying sentiments and circumstances of the church for the time being, is to forget that the fashion of the

world has nothing to do with a business of this kind. It is to forget that religion, as deriving its establishment from that Being, with whom "is neither variableness nor shadow of turning," must be expected to wear the character of its Divine Author, that of being "the same *yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*"

The reader will, I trust, excuse my having thus dwelt upon a subject, which to me appears important. The master prejudice of this enlightened age is, that all opinions or modes of faith are *equally good*. That liberality of sentiment, misnamed charity, the offspring of speculative religion, which affects to think well of men's safety in any religion, or even without any, has introduced a way of thinking upon religious matters unknown to the members of the Christian church in its better days. The object at present seems to be, not so much to bring mankind up to the standard of revealed religion, as to accommodate that standard to the opinions of mankind; by insisting as little as may be upon those doctrines which constitute the *essence* of Christianity; and so *generalizing* our creed, that persons of every persuasion may find no difficulty in subscribing to it. This plan of extending the Christian communion at the expence of the Christian faith, may certainly answer the purpose

of enlarging our congregations; but in that case they will be congregations of unbelievers of different descriptions, rather than what they were designed to be. Had the Christian religion been of this comprehensive nature; or had the first preachers of it thought fit to have adopted easy and conciliating measures for the sake of making converts to it, instead of being decided preachers of the faith *as it is in CHRIST*; the history of the church would have presented us with a very different scene from what it now does; and the Apostles and martyrs might have died natural deaths.

The ground upon which I have proceeded in the subject before me (and I wish it to be tried fairly upon the authority on which it stands, and not hastily condemned, because it is old-fashioned) is this; that there is an establishment both for the government and doctrine of the church of CHRIST founded upon Divine revelation, and confirmed by Apostolic practice. Should this be admitted, that establishment, so far as it can be ascertained, constitutes a certain fixed standard of judgment for mankind in religious matters. It cannot otherwise be what the name itself implies.

Archdeacon PALEY, if I understand him, has placed this subject before his readers in a different light; by making both the government and doctrine

of the church dependent upon the varying opinions of its members from time to time. The substance of what he has said in his chapter on religious establishments, when condensed into one sentence, being simply this; that there is no settled standard of authority by which the judgment of mankind is to be regulated on this subject; but that, considering the church as a flux body, its opinions and practices must be accommodated to the fluctuating condition of its members.

It shall be left with the reader to judge which plan is most conformable to sacred writ, and the design of the Christian revelation; *that*, whose object it is to bring mankind together in the unity of the same profession; or *that*, the perfection of which seems to consist in reconciling differences of opinion on religious subjects with the same church communion.

The circumstance of not one single reference being made, in the Archdeacon's chapter upon religious establishments, to the authority of any preceding writer upon that subject, will not, I trust, operate so far upon the reader's mind, as to make him forget that there have been, among the primitive fathers of the church, such writers as IGNATIUS, CLEMENT, and CYPRIAN; and among the divines of our own

church, such learned men as ANDREWS, HOOKER, HAMMOND, HICKES, and LESLEY; from whose writings, as from a storehouse well furnished with information upon all matters of doctrine and government, as they existed in the primitive church, every scribe, who wishes to be instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven, would do well to draw.

Should it be urged, that appeal to human authority was forborne, upon the idea that the letter of scripture could furnish the only conclusive evidence on subjects of this nature, the answer which CHARLES I. heretofore returned to HENDERSON the Scotch presbyter, may not be misapplied: “Scripturam quidem se omni veneratione prosequi; at, cum scripturæ sensus sit ipsum *νενομεινον*, et interpretandæ scripturæ aliqua demum methodus aut norma accommodanda sit, sibi quidem nullam hoc *primitivæ ecclesiæ* suffragio magis idoneam videri.”

There is still one remark, which presents itself on the perusal of most writers who appear dissatisfied with our present establishment; that when they would be understood to allude to the *test* required by our church, they adopt *general* positions, and *ambiguous* expressions, without particularizing those objection-

ionable points, to which it is at the same time their object to direct the attention of their reader.

Bishop HOADLEY, in allusion to the foregoing subject, wrote thus: "Those things which are not plain, are not necessary; those things we cannot comprehend, are no further necessary than is revealed. And when men go about to explain, and make them clear to the world, they go about a work they need not. But when they thrust into the faith their *vain philosophy*, and impose their *scholastic niceties* for necessary religion, they do more than they can justify. How far some councils have been guilty of this, carried more with a zealous hatred to a man or a party, than a love to necessary truth; let them that think it concerns them see." The late Bishop WARBURTON on the same subject expressed himself still more particularly. "Some men," said he, "who held the truth, that it is by *faith alone* we are justified, thought they could never have enough. Instead therefore of stopping at the few general and fundamental principles of Christian faith, clearly discovered and *uniformly believed** by all, they went on, and brought into the

* To prevent the reader from being at any loss for the Bishop's meaning in this case, those "fundamental principles of the Christian faith, which are uniformly believed by all," should have been

church, as terms of communion, abstruse questions relating to points obscurely delivered; and made still more doubtful by having the principles of the Greek philosophy, to which the sacred writers paid no regard, and with which the faith had no concern, applied to their solution." "The violation of the unity of the spirit having been occasioned by these mistakes, we may easily collect, that the means of preserving it entire had been the requiring no more, as the terms of church communion, than what CHRIST hath delivered to be explicitly believed; and these not consisting of many particulats, and all of them *clear* and *simple*," &c.

The remedy proposed by this writer for restoring that unity, which has thus been unhappily violated, was, that all *unnecessary articles* should be retrenched, to which the animosity of parties, the superstition of barbarous ages,* and even the negligence of time, pointed out. The Bishop might not perhaps have wished to be interrupted by an inquiry of the kind.

* "It is foreign to the purpose," said the learned Dr. BALGUY, in one of his charges, "when we are speaking of establishments in general, to suggest that our present Articles *impose* upon us *the doctrines of dark and ignorant ages*. Otherwise indeed one might be tempted to ask the objectors, of *what* ages they speak. I hope they do *not* speak of the times of the Reformation. The age of RIDLEY, and JEWELL, and HOOKER, will be revered by the latest posterity."

had given an imaginary importance; and that the formula of faith should be reduced to its primitive simplicity, leaving all disputable points to the free decision of every man's private judgment.

Archdeacon PALEY's opinion upon this subject appears to correspond strictly with that of the preceding writer. The remedy proposed by him against the complicated evil occasioned by the unnecessary extension and multiplication of tests is, "that they should be made as *simple* and *easy* as possible; and upon the supposition that a promise of conformity to the liturgy, or an engagement not to preach *certain doctrines*, might secure to the public teaching of religion as much of uniformity and quiet as is necessary to edification, that then such promise or engagement should supersede the use of *stricter* subscriptions."

One great object with every writer is to convey a distinct meaning to his reader. When this is not done, it must proceed either from defect of ability in the party, or some other cause. Where no defect of ability can be supposed to exist, it becomes a question which ought to be resolved, why, in a subject of importance, which respects the articles of the Christian faith, *ambiguous* language should be made use of; which at the same time that it may mean any

thing, yet speaks so indeterminately, as to leave the reader in doubt with respect to the precise meaning of the writer.

It may be asked, why we are not plainly told in this case, what is that *vain philosophy*, and what are those *scholastic niceties*, which the church imposes upon her ministers for necessary religion?—What are those “*abstruse questions* to which the sacred writers paid no regard, and with which the faith hath no concern?” What are those *unnecessary* articles which should be retrenched; and those *controverted doctrines* upon which it is proposed that silence should be enjoined? By a plain answer to these questions we should be qualified to judge to what articles of the church objection was meant to be made; and in what class of professors the objectors were to be placed.

Desirous of avoiding censorious judgment, I feel unwilling to draw any conclusion from the passages above noticed; or to allow a conjecture with respect to the particular professional tenets of the authors here alluded to, to engage my mind; because charity constrains me to think, that those who have subscribed to the articles of a church must believe them. The only consideration suggested to the reader on this oc-

caſion is, that the beſt of men are liable to error; and that writers moſt diſtinguiſhed for their talents will not always be found the ſafeſt guides in purſuits of religious knowledge.

A full conviction, at the ſame time, with reſpect to the nature, deſign, and conſtitution of the Chriſtian church, calls upon me, as an honeſt man, what tribute ſoever I may feel diſpoſed to pay to the abilities of the writer, from whom I am bound to differ, ſincerely to lament, that in theſe times eſpecially, when, if we may ſo expreſs ourſelves, the diſſolution of eſtabliſhments ſeems to have become the order of the day, a propagator of ſuch ideas as are to be met with in the writings of Archdeacon PALEY, ſhould be placed, as I underſtand he is, in the oracular chair of a learned univerſity.

But how ambiguous ſoever the language of ſome of our clergy occaſionally has been, we muſt hope, till we have conviction to the contrary, that their principles were ſound. For to form a concluſive judgment of any man from a ſpeech haſtily delivered, or a ſentence unguardedly written, would be not to deal with another as we would wiſh to be dealt by. It muſt be taken for granted, therefore, that every miniſter of the church, in conſequence of his engage-

ment, possesses some decided judgment in favour of the doctrine and government established in it. By him therefore it cannot be considered to be a matter of indifference, whether men believe that doctrine, or submit to that government, or not.

If he believe himself to be in the truth, he must of course think those who differ from him in opinion to be in error. And whilst he makes all due allowance for those who differ from him; (and large allowances will be made, when, to borrow an idea from Lord BACON, it is considered, that the human mind takes such *plies* from education, and a thousand other causes, that even wise and good men rarely think exactly alike upon any speculative subject whatever;) he will nevertheless conclude, if he be consistent with his profession, that where there is a standard for the regulation of human judgment on Divine subjects, two opposite opinions upon them cannot be true.

There is indeed, we are sorry to think, a wild sectarian spirit growing up in this country, which, if not properly counteracted, will work to the utter subversion of its constitution. For (as it has been excellently observed by a late writer, whose opinion I am proud to think perfectly corresponds with my own on this subject) “sects in religion and parties

in the state originate in general from similar principles. A sect is, in fact, a revolt against the authority of the church, just as a faction is against the authority of the state; or, in other words, a sect is a faction in the church, as a faction is a sect in the state: and the spirit which refuses obedience to the one, is equally ready to resist the other.”* A position which will not be controverted, but by those who feel themselves indisposed to admit the regular establishment of authority in either case.

But upon this head, it is to be feared, it may be said, “*Iliacos intra muros peccatur.*” What from the loose writing of some of the clergy, and the general silence of the body, upon the constitution of the Christian church, the subject is so grown out of knowledge, as to have lost almost universally its influence upon the mind. Ask an ignorant man, why he separates from the church, his answer probably will be, that he lives in a land of liberty, where he has a *right* to worship God in the way he thinks proper. Ask a man of reading and understanding, and he will quote respectable authority for the same opinion: whereas both one and the other might, it is probable, have continued members of the church,

* BOUCHER on the American Revolution. Discourse II.

had they been taught to form a correct notion of it. But when they have been led to consider the *church* as a word of general and indiscriminate application, and religion itself as a subject of mere private opinion, independent of all authority; it is not to be expected that they should feel disposed to restrain a licence, of which, from the latitudinarian way of thinking and acting, in which they have been educated, they conceive themselves born in rightful possession.

The minister of the church however, who prays constantly against *schism*, should in consequence think it is duty to prevent Christians, as far as may be, from falling into so dangerous a sin. And whilst he remembers of what spirit a Christian ought to be, the means made use of by him for the purpose will be no other than what a Christian ought to employ. "Following," (to make use of the words of the celebrated Mr. LOCKE) "the example of the *PRINCE of Peace*; who sent out his soldiers to the subduing of nations, and gathering them into his church, not armed with the sword, or other instruments of force, but accoutred in that best armour, the *Gospel of peace*, and the *exemplary* holiness of Christian conversation."

Without pronouncing sentence therefore upon, or disturbing, those who are without the church, his

object will be to preserve those that still remain in it. This he will do, by enabling them to form correct notions of the nature and constitution of the Christian church; and by giving them such an explanation from time to time of its services, as may produce in them a rational attachment to its communion. Considering the church as a society, which has GOD for its founder, and Christian faith as the offspring of Divine revelation, he will regard the varying opinions of mankind upon those subjects, rather as proofs of the weakness and incapacity of the human mind, than as illustrations of the truth. At the same time, therefore, that he is desirous of laying no unnecessary restraint upon human judgment in religious subjects; he will take care to point out the standard by which it should be regulated; a standard which draws the line between faith and credulity; between a sober inquiry after truth, accompanied with a proper respect for authority, and that licentiousness of opinion which knows no authority but its own; in a word, between that liberty with which CHRIST has made us free, and the liberty which the natural man is at all times disposed to make for himself.

But the clergy, some individuals of the body at least, have still more to answer for on this subject.

A freedom of opinion on church matters has led, as it might be expected, to a freedom of practice. Whilst some by their writings have put the establishment of the church, as it were, quite out of sight; others by their conduct have openly withdrawn Christians from it, by becoming, in some cases, officiating ministers in the places of public worship independent of episcopal jurisdiction; in others, by their attendance at places of worship which are in an actual state of separation from the established church of their country. How such conduct is consistent with the established government of the church; how the circumstance of a minister of the church taking upon himself to preach in a place of worship unlicensed by the bishop, is to be reconciled with canonical obligation;* with what propriety such a minister can, in the liturgy of the church, pray against *schism* in the place where he is in the actual commission of the sin; are points upon which I feel myself

* If the oath of *canonical obedience* mean any thing, it means obedience to the bishop according to the canons of the church. Taking it in this light, I do not see how those of the clergy, who renounce episcopal jurisdiction, by officiating in, or attending in direct defiance of the canons, at places of worship separated from the establishment, can be secure from the charge of at least *virtual perjury*.

at a loss to determine. For, as I have always understood, the schism of which such a minister is guilty, strictly corresponds with that sin, against which the Apostles and first bishops so loudly inveighed, which consisted in breaking the unity of the church by a separation of particular congregations from the authority of their respective bishops.* But exclusive of this important consideration, there is, moreover (as the subject strikes me) something like two fallacies practised upon this occasion. The proprietors of these separate places of worship, by sheltering them under the Toleration Act, prostitute an act of the legislature to a purpose for which it was never made. By so doing, what was designed only as an indulgence to those who dissented from the church, becomes minis-

* ST. CYPRIAN considered that the unity of the Christian church was liable to be broken two ways; by *heresy* and *schism*. "DIABOLUS hæreses invenit et *schismata*; quibus scinderet unitatem." CYPR. de Unit. Eccl. § 2. In allusion therefore to this distinction, after having, with an eye to the profession of the same faith, exemplified the unity of the church in the words of ST. PAUL; "unum corpus, et unus spiritus, una spes vocationis vestræ, unus DOMINUS, una fides, unum baptisma, unus DEUS;" he proceeds to point out that other bond of unity, by which it was designed that the Christian church should be held together. "Nemo fraternitatem mendacio fallat; nemo fidei veritatem perfidâ prævaricatione corrumpat; *episcopatus est unus*; cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur."—CYPR. de Unit. Eccl. § 4.

terial to the actual division of the church itself. This is a fallacy practised upon the legislature.*

But there is still another fallacy attached to these separate places of worship, which, though it may not be designed, ought to be guarded against. The adoption of the liturgy of the church of England serves as a decoy to many well-meaning Christians; who, from their perfect ignorance with respect to the nature of the Christian church, and the sin of schism, conclude, that if they attend the church service, it matters not *where* it is performed, or by *whom*; and thus become *schismatics*, without knowing that they are so.

It may be a position inadmissible in the present day, though founded upon the basis of truth and

* By the Act of Toleration, those who declare themselves *dissenters from the church of England* are exempted from certain penalties, on their taking certain oaths. But in the places of worship here alluded to, such as Lady HUNTINGDON's chapel in Bath, as it is called, and others of a similar kind, the parties assembled are not dissenters from the church of England; for they make use of its services, and have at times a clergyman of the church of England for their officiating minister; they are therefore a sort of separatists from the church, at the same time that they conform to it: a fallacy which, it might be hoped, no clergyman of the church of England would countenance, because it tends to defeat an object which he, as a minister of the establishment, ought to have at heart.

propriety, that no clergyman of the church ought to appear, much less to officiate, in any place of public worship, separated from that establishment of which he professes himself a minister. The spirit of the canons is certainly express to this purpose. Seeing this subject, therefore, in the light in which I have been taught to see it, I beg leave to suggest it to the consideration of my brethren, whether there is not a great inconsistency in their appearing under the character of Protestant Dissenters on one Sunday, and under that of ministers of the established church on the next: and whether, putting all other considerations out of the question, the single one of not giving offence ought not to operate with them so far as to prevent their adopting a practice, which renders their ministry less welcome to many serious members of the church; at the same time that it tends to bring the establishment into that contempt in the minds of the common people, which may prove the prelude to its destruction.

It is not consistent with charity to make the actions of men the decisive interpreters of their principles; because the motives by which men are impelled, are perfectly known only to that Being to whom judgment belongeth. Whether, therefore, there may or

may not be a portion of the old *Corinthian* leaven mixed up with this zeal for promoting God's honour in an *irregular* way is a point upon which I venture not to pronounce; my object being only to consider the evil consequences derivable to the establishment from the eccentric practice of its clergy; which will be the same, let the motives by which they have been directed be what they may.

Upon this head it will be sufficient to observe, that if the present schismatical practice, adopted by some clergy, of separating congregations from their bishops, continue to prevail; and nothing more is deemed necessary to the establishment of a congregation upon a church plan in any place, than money to erect a building, and popular talents to fill the seats; the office both of bishops and patrons is in a fair way to become useless. And thus the building a place for public worship, which in better times was considered a pious undertaking, having the promotion of God's honour for its chief object, degenerates into a business of mercenary speculation, and like other buildings for public resort, is estimated by the probable *quantum of interest* which it will produce to the proprietor. This is one of the signs of the times, and affords a strong proof of our living in the latter days; when the love

of many is waxed cold, and when faith is a thing rare to be found in the world.

But the evil will not stop here; for irregularity of any kind, like a bowl rolling down a declivity, seldom stops till it is arrived at the *ne plus ultra* of its course.

If the clergy of the church act thus independently of the bishop, and in breach of the establishment, it is not to be expected that laymen will feel themselves under greater restraint. Buildings will therefore be erected, and the church service performed, by persons not in episcopal orders.* For in such case, who is to draw the line between the irregularity of an authorized minister, and the licence of a presumptuous layman? If the episcopal authority be openly disregarded by those whose duty it is to reverence and support it, we must not be surprised, should God in judgment suffer an establishment to be totally dissolved, of the excellency of which its members seem, by their conduct, to be grown insensible.

It is to be feared, indeed, that the custom which has long since been adopted, even under episcopal authority, of erecting chapels at the expence of individuals for the performance of religious worship, has in some degree led to this total separation from it.

* A place of worship of this sort there is now open in Bath.

For by withdrawing the parishioner from the charge of his appointed minister, it has introduced a way of thinking more suited to the frequenters of conventicles, than to the members of the established church; by which the office of the *parish priest* is in a manner superseded by that of the *preacher*.

Considering, therefore, that we live in an age, in which many, who neither know the scripture, nor the nature of CHRIST's church, think they can make their own religion, their own church, and their own ministers, it is not to be wondered at, that it should by degrees become a matter of indifference with Christians *where* they are assembled, provided they like their teacher. But this plan of erecting chapels for the emolument of individuals not only introduces among us extra-parochial assemblies of an anomalous kind, destructive of the connection which ought to subsist between minister and people; but being incompatible with that principle of unity upon which the church of CHRIST is founded, and subversive of that order and discipline by which it ought to be maintained, tends to undermine the establishment itself. We are told by a celebrated writer* of the present day, that should the dissenters from the esta-

* Archdeacon PALEY.

blishment become a *majority* of the people, the establishment itself ought to be altered. This must be allowed to be a very summary, though to many it will appear to be neither a very satisfactory nor very practicable way of settling a most important concern. How far an old proverb, though not construed literally, ought to weigh in this case, thinking men will be apt to consider.

“*Est turba semper argumentum pessimi.*”

Indeed this strange and novel idea of putting the establishment of the Christian religion, as it were, to the vote, by making it dependent on the voice of the majority; thus bowing the knee to popular opinion, rather than to the God of our fathers; (in conformity with which the protestant government of this country may be called upon to desert the cause of protestantism, and become the establisher* of Romish error and superstition;) is an idea, which as it was not to be expected from a minister of the church, must, it is to be concluded, not have been considered by the Archdeacon in all its bearings.

* In Ireland, upon a moderate calculation, there are four Roman Catholics to one Protestant. In conformity therefore with the idea here advanced by the Archdeacon, the Roman Catholic ought to be the established religion in Ireland. To detail the operation of such an unlimited principle, would be an insult to the reader.

That such should be the ground upon which Dr. PRIESTLEY places this subject, can be no matter of surprise to us, when we consider that such is the ground upon which he builds his projected reformation of our church. In the character of a decided sectarist, a bold and open enemy to our ecclesiastical constitution, he tells us plainly, that means are preparing for its destruction; and that the final accomplishment of the undertaking waits only for the time, when the *majority* of the people shall be separated from it.

Now though I do not think Dr. PRIESTLEY's religious tenets calculated to gain him many converts among the people, and consequently no serious apprehensions are to be entertained on that score; it may not, however, be amiss to draw a lesson of prudence from the Doctor's information on this occasion. "Fas est et ab hoste doceri."

Certain it is, that separation from the established church of this country has of late years abundantly increased; and it is equally certain, that in proportion as this is the case, the establishment itself is weakened. For whatever be the different opinions of different sects, and what enmity soever they may bear towards each other on that account, the destruction of the establishment is a point upon which they are

at all times ready to join hand in hand. Now, if to this consideration we add the circumstance of that division, which is growing up as it were within the church, by which the parochial connection between minister and people is destroyed; in consequence of which, all ideas about a church establishment are every day growing more and more out of sight; we must not be surprised, if an evil, which every thinking well-wisher to his country deprecates, should advance upon us with more hasty steps than we may at present be willing to believe. This appears to be an object that well deserves the attention of those whose office it is to watch, "*ne quid detrimenti res publica capiat.*"

Should our governors think as they ought upon this subject, that our ecclesiastical establishment has in the present, as in every former day of trial, proved the firmest support to the government of this country, they will of course conclude that it is worth preserving. To speak with an immediate reference to those mad doctrines, the unhingers of all regular society, which have of late been circulated with such pernicious industry, the clergy of the establishment may say with OTHELLO, that they have "done the state some service," Indeed, to constitutional government at all

times they have felt it their duty to promote the firmest attachment. It will therefore be but a prudent exertion of political wisdom, to provide all means, consistent with sound judgment, for the more general extension of the benefits of an establishment, to which the government of this country confessedly stands indebted, with the view of counteracting as much as may be the present plan of limiting and contracting them.

The most decisive experiment having been made, that the principles of non-conformity ultimately produce faction in the state, and infidelity in the church; those to whom the guardianship of our constitution has been committed, cannot better discharge their trust, than by giving all possible encouragement to the building additional churches in all populous places, where those already built prove too small for the accommodation of the inhabitants.

Whereas, if to remedy this inconvenience, the present mode of erecting chapels at the charge of individuals, with an eye to private emolument, continue to be adopted, we are promoting the very object which Dr. PRIESTLEY has before him; for we are thereby separating the great body of the people from the established church; and in a manner

forcing them to become non-conformists, by rendering their communion with the church incompatible with their circumstances. In which case, we must not be surpris'd, if the body of the people should feel uninterested for the preservation of an establishment, which seems to take so little concern about them.

The consequences of such a ruinous practice are incalculable; and never more to be dreaded than in these times, when the licentious doctrines of equality and consequent insubordination are industriously propagated; doctrines, which a plan of religious worship separating the rich from the poor seems peculiarly calculated to promote.

There is indeed an *equality*, by which all Christians stand connected with each other, as children of the same heavenly Father; which ought as much as possible to be kept alive among us in all religious assemblies. A church therefore never looks so much like what it ought to be, as when all ranks of people join together in these general acts of worship, which are expressive of their general dependence upon that "LORD over all, who, in one sense or another, is rich unto all who call upon him." The GOD whom we worship is no respecter of persons; the church, be consistent with order and decency, to keep this in

view; that the rich, from this indistinctive plan of worship, may continually be taught to remember that the poor man is his brother; and that the poor man may be supported in the conscientious discharge of his humble and laborious duties in life, by looking forward to the day, when all worldly distinctions will be swallowed up in that common relationship, which all true members of the church will then bear to CHRIST its head.

Sorry we are to think, that the doctrines which have long been industriously circulated, and which have produced too successful an effect upon the minds of the people of this country, are inimical to government in any shape. The very name of an establishment in these days, as it implies some restraint upon liberty, conveys to the ears of many an unwelcome sound. Separated from the errors and freed from the chains of Popery, we seem, alas! (to make use of the words of a great writer) to be “breaking out into a state of religious anarchy.” An attention, therefore, to the subject before us becomes a matter of most important concern.

We do not profess ourselves to be in the number of those, if there be any such, who think that there is nothing amiss amongst us; for this would be to lay

claim to that perfection which belongs not to man. At the same time, in reference to the present state of things in the world, it may be proper to suggest to the reader, the great danger of his being too readily impressed with the idea of improvement, either in church or state. There are no two words in the English language, the sound of which, from the use that has been lately made of them, conveys so strong a sense of alarm to the thinking mind, as those of liberty and reformation. Things most valuable in themselves become most destructive in their abuse. We have lived to see, what we should not otherwise have believed, the giants of infidelity waging open war against heaven; false philosophers, under the specious pretence of diffusing light and liberty through a benighted and enslaved world, engaged in a more daring league of systematic opposition to the plans of Divine Providence for the benefit of mankind, than has been ever witnessed. It is with a mixture of horror and indignation, that we look back to the scenes, which these ministers of rebellious darkness have been permitted to bring forth; it is with awe and trembling, we look forward to what may, in the Divine Council, be the winding up of this eventful tragedy.

It is some consolation, indeed, to those who are humbly waiting for their LORD's coming, to think, that the gates of hell shall not finally prevail against his church. At the same time it should seem, as if "woe had been pronounced against the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea; and that the Devil was come down unto them, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Rev. xii. 12.

From the chapter, which modern history presents to our perusal, we feel confident in the assertion, that even the most corrupt religion is to be preferred to no religion at all; and that where reformation is really wanted, it is not to be effected by means which tend to the dissolution of constituted authority: Whilst from the plan, which has been adopted for the purpose of enabling infidelity to triumph over the Christian cause, we hesitate not to affirm, that the preservation of our establishment is *essential* to the continuance of the church in this country; it being the best security against that Babel of religious confusion and consequent infidelity, which would be the ultimate effect of its destruction. An establishment is to be regarded as the out-work of religion. The enemy who pulls it down, does it but with a view to

the more complete destruction of the citadel which it was designed to secure.

Some well-meaning people, indeed, have found a way of satisfying themselves upon this head, by making the church of CHRIST and church of England mean two different things: and thus, while they flatter themselves that they are acting upon the best principle, they are putting themselves into a state of preparation to become instrumental in the destruction of that church of which they profess themselves members. That ignorant people should be carried away with so plausible an idea, can be no matter of surprise; they have been, and always will be, imposed upon by sounds. But that men of reading and education should adopt it, affords one proof among many, that experience does not always furnish wisdom.

It must be confessed, indeed, that the age in which we live, though a reading, is certainly not a learned, age. Light publications of the day, calculated for the purpose of present entertainment, and superficial information, are preferred to the scientific pages of the learned, though less amusing writer, which require abstraction of thought and intenseness of application to make them yield fruit to the reader. Advantage therefore, which we frequent, ought, as far as may

has been industriously taken of this general taste for superficial reading, to undermine those fundamental principles of government, both in church and state, which constituted in better times a standard for judgment in these matters; by means of those plausible theories and specious arguments, which, by un-hinging and unsettling the human mind, are calculated to prepare it for every change.

Against such men and their writings it was never perhaps more necessary to be on our guard than in these days; when the right of private judgment and the freedom of enquiry (principles in themselves of unquestionable and excellent use, when properly employed) have been carried to such an extent, as in a manner to set at nought all authority, under the plausible pretence of delivering mankind from established prejudices.

To form a judgment, indeed, from the systems of some modern speculatists, which manifest a supercilious inattention to the sober deductions of all who have gone before them, in the walks either of religious or political knowledge, we should conclude, that we were newly dropt into a world of yesterday, and had all our experience to learn; or that our forefathers had been sleeping through a long dark night of ig-

norance and insensibility, or at best had been groping their way by a glimmering taper, which had afforded but light sufficient to make their darkness visible; and that we, their more favoured sons, were just opening our eyes to that dawn of enlightened reason, which our Creator in his wisdom had thought fit to reserve for the more full illumination for the present day.

What people are taught to despise, they will not long be solicitous to preserve. Upon this principle, it may be a subject worthy the consideration of those who really mean well to our establishment, whether this imaginary distinction between the church of CHRIST and church of England now propagating among us be not designed, by the enemies of the latter, as an introductory step to its wished-for dissolution.

Wise and good men, in discerning the signs of the times, will learn from them, we trust, a seasonable lesson of prudence and caution.

Should it, however, be the will of that wise Being who directeth all things, (as from the complexion of the times we are occasionally led to fear may be the case) that this nation should learn a second lesson in that licentious school, in which it might be thought that it had remained a length of time sufficient to have received a finished education; it may at least be



hoped that the clergy will not be brought in as accessory to the judgment.

Be it remembered, that the most common way of wounding the church has been through the sides of its clergy. This method was practised with success; when the church of this country possessed a most pious and able ministry. We are not therefore to be surprised that it should be attempted in the present day.

But although no argument drawn from the conduct of individuals ought in equity to bear against the body to which they belong; yet when a prejudice once takes possession of the human mind, it is not always in the power of reason to confine it to the precise object that originally gave rise to it. This consideration should make the clergy, of all men, most circumspect in their conduct; because, as the world will judge, it is in their power to do the greatest injury to the cause, of which they ought to be the most effectual supporters.

We are told, that “the time is fast approaching, when Christianity will be almost as openly disavowed in the language, as in fact it is already supposed to have disappeared from the conduct, of men; when infidelity will be held to be the necessary appendage of a man of fashion; and *to believe* will be

deemed the indication of a feeble mind, and a contracted understanding.”* Should such, alas! be the actual condition of this country, the history of the Christian church will shew what its future condition must be. In such case, with lamenting JEREMY we may weep over the fallen “city become as a widow; she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. Her adversaries are the chief; her enemies prosper; for the LORD hath afflicted her, for the multitude of her transgressions.” Lamentations of JEREMIAH, i. That God, who spared not the countries where his church was originally planted, but in consequence of their corruption suffered the light of his truth to depart from them, will most assuredly not spare this country under similar circumstances. When the purpose for which the church has been established is not answered, it will not long be suffered to mock the design of its Divine Founder. In the prophetic language, when the vine-

yard which GOD has enclosed shall cease to be duly cultivated; and the vine be suffered to take its wild and natural growth; the hedge by which it had been separated from the waste will be pulled down; and the boar out of the wood, and the wild beast of the field, be permitted to devour it. Some anti-christian power, intent upon nothing but plunder and destruction, or a domestic enemy having the same object in view, will sooner or later be let loose upon a church when in this degenerate condition, and become the instrument of executing upon her the vengeance due to her crimes. May GOD give the people of this nation such a sight of their danger, as may tend effectually to guard them against it!

Indisposed, as I think I am, to superstition and enthusiasm, the present events of Europe are nevertheless of so awful and alarming a kind, as to affect me with the most serious and interesting concern. Upon the authority of sacred writ we are assured, that the time must come when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of GOD and of his CHRIST.” That Being “who seeth the end from the beginning;” before whom all nations are as nothing, yea, less than nothing;” will make human policy subservient to the accomplishment of his wise

purposes. What important page in the great history of the world may now be turning over, it is not for us to determine. As Christians, we look with reverence to the issue of the Divine councils, whatever it may be; knowing that all things will work together for good to those who have the LORD for their GOD. At the same time we should want the feelings of men, did we not tremble at the threatening aspect of that black cloud, which has been long pouring forth sweeping destruction upon the nations around us.

In such a critical season, the office of the priesthood becomes more than ever an office of dignified importance. In the character of atoning AARON, with incense in his hand, the priest is called upon to stand as it were between the dead and the living; and, if it may be, to stay the plague, the worst of plagues, that plague of religious and moral disorder, which has long deformed the face of civilized Europe.

Should not the salt have quite lost its favour, the land which we inhabit may yet be seasoned and thereby preserved. In such case, the judgments of the LORD now in the earth, instead of bringing down and destroying, will be employed in mercy to purge and purify our church and nation.

To this end the priests and ministers of the LORD must stand between the porch and the altar, and exert themselves, “before their eyes begin to wax dim, that they may not see; and ere the lamp of GOD goeth out in the temple of the LORD.” I SAM. iii. If, in consequence of the unsettled notions which now prevail upon religious subjects, Christians are continually dropping away from the church, let it be for any cause rather than on account of the irregularity, incapacity, or want of zeal, in its ministers.

Ignorance, among the lower order of people at least, is well known to be one general cause of separation from the church. Let it be an object with the clergy, then, to remove that ignorance with respect to the church, by bringing their people so acquainted with its nature, and the design of its establishment, that they may feel it their duty to continue members of it. Whilst they are suffered to remain uninformed upon this subject, the preservation of Christian unity is not to be expected.

But above all, their object must be to take away all just reason for the desertion of their ministry, by giving full proof of their evangelical commission. With the Apostle they must be able to say to their hearers, “We take you to record this day, that we

are pure from the blood of all men; for we have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

The plea generally advanced by modern separatists, that *sound doctrine* is not preached in our church, upon how partial ground soever it may really stand, must at all events be effectually removed. For the people must not only be taught, that it is their duty to live in communion with the church; they must moreover be satisfied, that they shall be profited by that communion. In a matter of this importance, men will take the liberty to judge for themselves: and if they have reason to think that they are not fed with the true bread of life within the walls of the church, they will unquestionably seek it, where they fancy it maybe found, either in fields or in conventicles.

And if to the preaching sound doctrine the clergy would add an occasional explanation of the meaning of our church offices, that their congregations may become active and spiritual performers in them; the people would soon be convinced that those Christians, who would offer up to God the most reasonable service, must come to the church of England to do it.

This is the only way, that I know, to preserve the unity of the church; and to revive, through Divine grace, the spirit of Christianity; by informing men,

in the first place, that there is such a thing as an established constitution of the church of CHRIST, and that Christians are to consider themselves members of it, as a fold of sheep gathered under its shepherd, and not as straggling individuals: and in the second place, by convincing them, that the church is best calculated to carry all those purposes into effect, for which it has been established by its Divine Founder.

It were devoutly to be wished; and I trust there is but one opinion among my brethren upon this head, that every minister of the church might so discharge his duty in these respects, as to be qualified, in the language of Archbishop SHARP, thus to address himself to his people: “ This I am sure of, so long as you continue in our communion, you are in the communion of the true church of CHRIST. I dare answer for the salvation of all those who, continuing in our church, live up to the principles of it. But I dare answer nothing for them, who, being brought up in this church, and having so great opportunities given them of knowing the truth, do yet depart from it. I pray GOD, they may be able to answer for themselves.

I conclude this discourse with what my brethren, the clergy, may probably thank me for redeeming

from oblivion; I mean that prayer from the elegant pen of ERASMUS, which was heretofore set forth as a part or appendix to a Primer or Liturgy, which HENRY the Eighth caused to be published by the supreme authority of the Church of England, and which appears strictly adapted to the circumstances of the present times.

“DOMINE JESU CHRISTE, qui omnipotentiâ tuâ fecisti omnes creaturas, visibiles, invisibiles, et Divinâ sapientiâ tuâ gubernasti disposuisti que omnia ordinatè; qui ineffabili bonitate tuâ custodis, defendis, promovesque omnia; qui profundâ misericordiâ tuâ reficis ruinosa, renovas collapsa, vivificas mortuos; digneris (precamur) ad extremum, in dilectam sponsam tuam ecclesiam, dulcem illum et misericordem vultum tuum, quo cœlestia omnia terrestriaque, et quæ supra cœlum infraque terram sunt pacificas, conjicere: digneris teneros misericordesque oculos in nos convertere, quibus PETRUM semel, magnum ecclesiæ tuæ pastorem apexisti, et continuò rediit secum in memoriam, et in pœnitentiam ductus est; quibus dispersam semel multitudinem perlustrasti, et misericordiâ commovebaris, quod boni pastoris defectu errabant quasi oves sparsæ palentesque. Tu satis vides, bone Pastor, quot varia luporum genera in ovilia tua irruperunt, é quibus

unusquisque clamat, Hic CHRISTUS est, Hic CHRISTUS est: ita ut, si fieri posset, in errores deducerentur electi. Tu vides, quibus flatibus, quibus fluctibus, quibus tempestatibus, misera navis jactatur; in quâ pusillus grex tuus de submersione periclitatur. Quid autem nunc restat, nisi ut prorsum submergatur, omnesque nos pereamus? Hujus tempestatis causa est nostra iniquitas et depravata vita; hoc nos videmus et confitemur, justitiam tuam cernimus, et injustitiam nostram lamentamur: sed ad misericordiam tuam provocamus quæ (secundum psalmum prophetæ tui) exuperat omnia opera; multa supplicia sustinuimus, multis bellis fracti, multis jacturis bonorum consumpti, tot morborum pestiumque generibus flagellati, tot fluctibus quassati, tot perterrefacti; et nullus tamen nobis itâ fatigatis, et inusitatâ malorum vi debilitatis, portus perfugiumque apparet, sed quotidie magis magisque graves pluresque poenæ imminere cervicibus nostris videntur. Non hîc de tuâ asperitate conquerimur, misericordissime DOMINE, sed tuam potius misericordiam intuemur, quòd longè graviores plagas commeriti sumus. Nos verò abs te, misericordissime DOMINE, precamur, non quid meritis nostris dignum sit consideres aut perpendas; sed potius quid deceat misericordiam tuam, sine quâ ne angeli quidem in cœlo

consistere possunt, nedum nos vasa luti infirma. *Miserere nostri, REDEMPTOR noster*, qui facillimè exoraris, non quod nos misericordiâ tuâ digni sumus; sed hanc gloriam nomini tuo dato. Ne patiaris Judæos, Turcas, reliquosque qui vel non noverunt Te, vel gloriæ tuæ invident, perpetuò de nobis triumphare et dicere; ubi *DEUS*, ubi *REDEMPTOR*, ubi *SERVATOR*, ubi Sponsus illorum est? Hæc contumeliosa verba et convitia in te, *DOMINE*, redundant; dum ex malis nostris bonitatem tuam existimant, nos derelinqui putant, quos emendari non cernunt. Cum semel in navigio dormires, et tempestas subito exorta minaretur mortem omnibus qui in navi erant, ad clamorem paucorum discipulorum excitabaris; et continuò fluctus quieverunt, ventus cessavit, tempestas in magnam tranquillitatem conversa est; aquæ mutæ Creatoris vocem agnoverunt. In hâc autem longè graviore tempestate, in quâ non paucorum hominum corpora in discrimen veniunt, sed innumerabiles animæ periclitant; ad vocem universæ ecclesiæ tuæ, *DOMINE*, precamur, ut vigiles, quæ nunc in periculo submersionis est. Tot jam millia hominum clamitant, *DOMINE*, serva nos, perimus; tempestas hæc humanam potentiam superat, immo verò conatus eorum qui illi præsidium ferrent, in contrarium avertuntur.

Quod hæc præstabit, solum verbum tuum est: verbum solum oris tui dicito, tempestas cessa, et confestim tranquillitas expetita apparebit. Quot millibus impiorum pepercisses, si in civitate Sodomæ vel decem inventi fuissent: nunc vero tot millibus hominum gloriam nominis tui amantium, et propter decorem domûs tuæ gementem, non horum precibus adductus iram remittes, et consuetarum antiquarumque misericordiarum tuarum recordaberis? An non Divinâ sapientiâ tuâ nostram stultitiam in gloriam tuam convertes? An non malorum improbitatem in ecclesiæ tuæ bonum commutabis? Cum enim misericordia tua solet omnia sublevare, cum res nobis immedicabilis esse videtur; nec potentiâ aut sapientiâ humanâ corrigi potest. Tu solus res etiam inordinatissimas in ordinem adducis, qui solus author conservatorque pacis es. Tu antiquam confusionem quam Chaos appellamus formavisti, in quâ sine ordine, sine modo, perturbatè discordia semina rerum jacebant, et admirabili serie res naturâ suâ pugnantes, vinculo perpetuo copulavisti et colligavisti. Quanto, quæso, major confusio est hæc; ubi nulla charitas, nulla fides, nulla copulatio amoris, nulla legum, nulla magistratuum reverentia, nulla opinionum consensio; sed quasi in perturbatissimo choro unusquisque diversum canit?

In cœlestibus planetis nulla est dissensio; elementa suas sedes tenent, unumquodque constitutum sibi officium facit: et sponsam suam cuius causâ omnia facta sunt, continuâ sic dissensione perire et labefactari permittis? Malosne spiritus seditionis authores atque administratos, in ditione tuâ sine ullâ reprehensione ita regnare permittes? potentemque illum iniquitatis ducem, quem semel dejeceras, castra invadere et milites tuos, spoliare fines? Cum hîc in hominibus versabaris, vocem tuam fugiebant dæmones. Emitte, quæsumus, DOMINE, spiritum tuum, qui e pectoribus omnium nomen tuum profitentium malos spiritus magistros intemperantiæ, avaritiæ, vanæ gloriæ, libidinum, scelerum, discordiæ, abigat. Crea in nobis, Rex et DEUS noster, cor mundum, et spiritum sanctum in pectoribus nostris renova, nec spiritum sanctum tuum auferas a nobis. Restitue nobis fructum salutaris sanitatis tuæ, et spiritu principali corrobora sponsam pastoresque ejus. Hoc spiritu reconciliasti cœlestia terrestribus, hoc formasti ac reduxisti tot linguas, tot nationes, tam diversa hominum genera in unum corpus ecclesiæ, quod corpus eodem spiritu copulatur capiti. Hunc spiritum si in omnium hominum cordibus renovare digneris, tum externæ hæ quoque miseriæ cessabunt: aut si non cessaverint, ad

fructum saltem, utilitatemque diligentium te traducuntur. Siste hanc, DOMINE JESU, confusionem; hoc horribile Chaos in ordinem reducito: expande spiritum tuum super aquas malè fluctuantium opinionum. Et quia spiritus tuus, qui juxta prophetæ sententiam continet omnia, scientiam etiam habet vocis; effice, ut quemadmodum omnibus qui in domo tuâ sunt, unum lumen, unus DEUS, una spes, unus spiritus; sic unam quoque habeant vocem, unam cantilenam, unum sonum, unam Catholicam veritatem profitentes. Cum in cœlum gloriosè ascendisti, demisisti de cœlo res pretiosissimas; dedisti dona hominibus, varia munera spiritûs divisisti: renova, DOMINE, de cœlo veterem bonitatem; da nunc ecclesiæ labefactæ et inclinatæ, quod illi emergenti et exorienti initia dederas. Da principibus magistratibusque gratiam timoris tui; ut ita rempublicam suam gubernent, quasi statim tibi, REGI Regum, rationem reddituri. Da sapientiam semper assistricem illis, ut quodcunque optimum factu fuerit, et animo provideant, et factis persequantur. Da episcopis tuis donum prophetiæ, ut sanctas scripturas non ex suis ingeniis, sed tuâ in spiratione declarent et interprentur. Da triplicem illis charitatem, quam a PETRO requirebas, quando illius curæ oves tuas commisisti.

Da sacerdotibus tuis temperantiæ castitatisque amorem. Da populo tuo studium sequendi mandata tua, et promptitudinem obediendi iis, quos tu super illos constituisti. Ita fiet, ut si largitate tuâ principes ea imperent, quæ tu præcipis; pastores eadem doceant, populus utrisque pareat: veteris ecclesiæ dignitas tranquillitasque cum ordinis conservatione ad gloriam nominis tui reflorescat. Ninivitis pepercisti morti addictis, statim ut ad pœnitentiam conversi fuerant; domum tuam inclinantem jam et corruentem dispicies, quæ vice facci gemitus, vice cinerum lachrymas profundit? promissisti remissionem conversis ad te; at hoc donum tuum est, ut quis cum toto corde suo ad te convertatur, ut omnis bonitas nostra ad gloriam tuam redundet. Tu factor es; refice opus tuum quod formasti. Tu Redemptor es; serva quod emisisti. Tu Servator es; ne finas perire qui tibi innituntur. Tu Dominus es, et Possessor; vindica possessionem tuam. Tu Caput es; opem fer membris. Tu Rex es; da nobis legum tuarum reverentiam. Tu Princeps Pacis es; aspira nobis fraternam charitatem. Tu DEUS, miserere supplicum tuorum; sis (ut beatus PAULUS loquitur) omnia in omnibus; ut universus ecclesiæ tuæ chorus consentientibus animis et vocibus consonantibus gratias de misericordiâ inventâ agant Patri;

Filio, et Spiritui Sancto; qui pro perfectissimo concordie exemplo personarum proprietate distinguuntur, et conjunctione naturæ adunantur; quibus laus et gloria ad omnem æternitatem. Amen.

END OF VOL. I.

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